ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ
ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ

ସଂପାଦନା :
ପ୍ରଫେସର ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ମହାନ୍ତି



ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ
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ସଂପାଦନା

ପ୍ରଫେସର ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ମହାନ୍ତି



କଟକ-୨

ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ।। ସଂପାଦନା ପ୍ରଫେସର ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ମହାନ୍ତି ।। ପ୍ରକାଶକ : ଅଗ୍ରଦୂତ, ବାଙ୍କାବଜାର, କଟକ-୭୫୩୦୦୨ ।। ପ୍ରଥମ ପ୍ରକାଶ ୨୦୦୫ ।। କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ସହାୟତା : ମା' ଶାରଳା ଡି.ଟି.ପି., କଟକ-୧୪ ।। ମୁଦ୍ରଣ : ପଞ୍ଚସଖା ଅଫସେଟ୍, କଟକ ।।

ମୂଲ୍ୟ : ଟ. ୧୨୫/-

SOILABALA DASNKA ATMAJIBANI O' ANYANYA PRABANDHA II Written by : **Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty** II Published by : **AGRADUTA**, Banka Bazar, Cuttack-753002 II 1st Edition – **2005** II Computer Support by : **Maa Sarala D.T.P.**, Cuttack-14 II Printed by : **Panchasakha Offset**, Cuttack.

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ମୋର ମା କବି ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍‌ପ୍ରଭା ଦେବୀଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତିରେ ।

(୧୯୨୬-୧୯୭୭)

କୃତଜ୍ଞତା

ଉତ୍କଳର ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତିକା-
-ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ କିଛି ମୌଳିକ ଲେଖା ଏହି ପୁସ୍ତକ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେବାଦ୍ୱାରା ମୋର ଅନେକ ଦିନର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଆଜି ସାର୍ଥକ ହୋଇଛି । ଏହି ଅବକାଶରେ ମୁଁ ଆଗ୍ରହୀ ବନ୍ଧୁ, ଲେଖକ, ସମାଲୋଚକ ଓ ପାଠକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ବିଶେଷକରି, ପ୍ରଫେସର ଶରତ କୁମାର ମହାନ୍ତି, ପ୍ରଫେସର ସନାତନ ମହାନ୍ତି, ଡକ୍ଟର ପ୍ରତିଭା ରାୟ, ପ୍ରଫେସର ମହାପାତ୍ର ନୀଳମଣି ସାହୁ, ଅଗ୍ରଦୂତ ପ୍ରକାଶନର ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ମନ୍ମଥ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ଏବଂ ପାପା ମାଉସୀ, ଜାତୀୟ ପାଠାଗାର କଲିକତାର ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ସାଫଲ୍ୟ ନନ୍ଦୀ ଏହାଛଡ଼ା ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରଦୋଷ ମହାନ୍ତି, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରାଣୀ ସାହୁ ଏବଂ ଶ୍ରୀ ରାଜୀବ ସାହୁଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ମୁଁ କୃତଜ୍ଞ ।

ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷା ଡକ୍ଟର (ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ) ବୀଣା ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସହାୟତା ଏବଂ ମୋର ପିତା ଶ୍ରୀ ପଞ୍ଚାନନ ମହାନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ମାତା କବି ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍‌ପ୍ରଭାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଏହି ବହିର ଉତ୍ସ ।

ହାଇଦ୍ରାବାଦ
୧ ନଭେମ୍ବର, ୨୦୦୪

ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ମହାନ୍ତି

ମୁଖବନ୍ଧ

ଉପନିବେଶ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ସମାଜସଂସ୍କାରର କାହାଣୀ : ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସ

ବିଂଶଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭ ଓ ଊନବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟ ବେଳକୁ ସମାଜସଂସ୍କାର ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଓ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଅଂଶଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଶିକ୍ଷିତା ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସ ଅନ୍ୟତମା। ସାଧାରଣତଃ ଆମର ଜାତୀୟ ଜୀବନରେ ଇତିହାସକୁ ବିଶେଷ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ଦିଆଯାଏ ନାହିଁ। ତଥାପି ରାଜ୍ୟର ଏକ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ନାମିତ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ତାଙ୍କ ନାମଟି ଆମ ସ୍ମୃତିରେ ରହିଛି। ତେବେ ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ବହୁବିଧ ଅବଦାନ ସଂପର୍କରେ ଅଳ୍ପ କେତେଜଣ ମାତ୍ର ଅବଗତ ଅଟନ୍ତି। ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀଚରିତର ମୁଖବନ୍ଧରେ ବମ୍ବେର ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳ ହରେକୃଷ୍ଣ ମହତାବ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି :

''ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶୈଳାବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ବିଗତ ଷାଠିଏ ବର୍ଷ କିମ୍ବା ତଦୂର୍ଦ୍ଧ... ସମୟ ଧରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପ୍ରଗତି ସହିତ ଅଙ୍ଗାଙ୍ଗୀଭାବେ ଜଡ଼ିତ। ସେ କେବଳ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କର ସୁପୁତ୍ରୀ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି, ପରନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାବଳୀର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ସଚିବ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥିଲେ। ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସହିତ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କର ଅବିଭାଜ୍ୟ ସଂପର୍କ ଥିଲା। ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଧରି ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱାବଧାନରେ ସେ ଶିକ୍ଷା, ସମାଜ ସଂସ୍କାର ଓ ରାଜନୈତିକ ସଚେତନତା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ। ଆଜିର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଆମେ ଯାହା କିଛି ଦେଖୁଛୁ ତା'ର ପଶ୍ଚାତ୍‌ରେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ପରିକଳ୍ପନା ଏବଂ ତଦନୁଯାୟୀ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟନିର୍ବାହର ମୌଳିକ ଭୂମିକା ରହିଛି। ବିଶେଷତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ମାର୍ଗଦର୍ଶକ ରୂପେ ବିବେଚିତ ହେବେ। ଆଜି ଅଶୀବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ପଦାର୍ପଣ କରିସାରିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର କ୍ରିୟାଶୀଳତା ବହୁ ଯୁବକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ।''

• ଏହି ନିବନ୍ଧନିହିତ ସମସ୍ତ ତଥ୍ୟ ମୂଳତଃ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଉପରେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟବେସିତ।

''ଦୀର୍ଘ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଧରି ସେ ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପାଇଁ ଯାହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଓ ଆମ ପିଢ଼ି ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି କୃତଜ୍ଞ''– ଡଃ. ମହତାବ୍ ଏ କଥା ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିଥିବାବେଳେ ମନେହୁଏ ଯେପରି ସମଗ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ପାଶୋରି ଯାଇଛି । ରାଜ୍ୟର ପ୍ରଖ୍ୟାତ ପାଠାଗାର କେତୋଟିରେ ତାଙ୍କ ରଚିତ ପୁସ୍ତକ ନାହିଁ; ଏସବୁର ଅର୍ଥ କ'ଣ ହୋଇପାରେ ? ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତିରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କ ସାଧନା ଓ ସିଦ୍ଧିର କାହାଣୀକୁ କିଏ ଯେପରି ପୋଛି ଲିଭାଇ ଦେଇଛି ! ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସୁଖ୍ୟାତ ସନ୍ତାନମାନଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ କେବଳ ''ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କର ପାଳିତା କନ୍ୟା''ରୂପେ ଅଭିହିତ କରାଯାଇ ଏକ କୋଣରେ ମାତ୍ର ଠିଆ କରାଇ ଯଥାର୍ଥ ସମ୍ମାନରୁ ବଞ୍ଚିତ କରାଯାଇଛି ।

ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଜଣେ ବହିରାଗତ ରୂପେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ମୁଖ୍ୟସ୍ରୋତରୁ ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ କରିଦିଆଯାଇଥିବା ପରି ମନେହୁଏ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ଧର୍ମ ଆଂଶିକ ଭାବରେ ଦାୟୀ । ଅଥଚ ମାଳତୀ (ସେନ୍) ଚୌଧୁରୀଙ୍କ ପରି ଏକାଧିକ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟା ମହିଳା ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଆଦୃତି ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଓ ନବକୃଷ୍ଣ ଚୌଧୁରୀଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ପରି ଗାନ୍ଧିବାଦର ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣୀତ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଏକ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ରାଜନୈତିକ ପରିବାରରେ ମାଳତୀ ବିବାହ କରିଥିବାରୁ ସମ୍ଭବତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଅଧିକ ଗୃହୀତ ହୋଇପାରିଥିଲେ । ଅପରପକ୍ଷରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ରାଜନୀତିରେ ବେଶ୍ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପୁରପଲ୍ଲୀ ତାଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟଧାରାର ପରିସର ନଥିଲା । ବିଦେଶରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଇଂରାଜୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା, ସମ୍ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀ ତଥା ଆଇନଜ୍ଞ ବିଚାରପତି ଓ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବୀଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ତାଙ୍କର ରାଜନୈତିକ ଜୀବନ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏକ ଭିନ୍ନ ଓ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଥିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ସେ ନିଜର ବାସସ୍ଥାନ ଓ କର୍ମଭୂମି ରୂପେ ଆଦରି ନେଇଥିଲେ, ତଥାପି ଅଧିକାଂଶ ସମୟରେ ସେ ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରୁଥିଲେ । ଫଳରେ ଅନିଚ୍ଛାକୃତ ଭାବରେ ସେ ସାଧାରଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇଗଲେ ।

(୨)

ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଓ କର୍ମମୟ ଜୀବନ ସଂପର୍କିତ ତଥ୍ୟ ଦୁଷ୍ପ୍ରାପ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ଯାହା କିଛି ରହିଛି ତାହା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାପ୍ତ ନୁହେଁ । ୧୯୫୬ ମସିହାରେ କଟକରୁ ଶୈଳବାଳା ନିଜେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ପୁସ୍ତକ ''ଏ ଲୁକ୍ ବିଫୋର୍ ଆଣ୍ଡ ଆଫ୍‌ଟର'' ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥିଲେ । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ତଥ୍ୟର ଅବତାରଣା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଏହି ପୁସ୍ତକଟି ଉପରେ ଅଧିକ ନିର୍ଭର କରିଛି ଯଦିଓ ବହିଟିର ଅନେକ ବିବୃତ୍ତି ଓ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା ବାସ୍ତବିକତା ଓ ଐତିହାସିକ ସତ୍ୟତା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ପୁନର୍ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କରେ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମୁଷ୍ଟିମେୟ କେତେଜଣ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ପରି ଶୈଳବାଳା ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ରଚନା କରିବାକୁ କାହିଁକି ଇଚ୍ଛା କଲେ ? ପୁଣି ଇଂରାଜୀରେ ? ପୁସ୍ତକର ଉପକ୍ରମରେ ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି: "ମୋ ଜୀବନ ଓ ଅନୁଭୂତିର କେତେକ ରୋମାଞ୍ଚକର ଘଟଣାକୁ ଲିପିବଦ୍ଧ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ମୋର କେତେଜଣ ବନ୍ଧୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର କହି ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ପରିଶେଷରେ ୮୨ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ କ୍ୟାଟାରାକ୍ଟ ହେତୁ ମୋର ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଶକ୍ତି କ୍ଷୀଣ ହୋଇ ଆସିଲାଣି, ମୋର ଅନୁରୋଧ ରକ୍ଷା କରି କଲିକତାର ଜଣେ ପ୍ରିୟବନ୍ଧୁ ମୁଁ ଯାହା ଡାକିଛି ସେପରି ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି" । (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୧)

କଲିକତାର ଭବାନୀପୁର ନିକଟସ୍ଥ ଚକରବୀର ରୋଡ଼ରେ ୧୮୭୫ ମସିହାରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଜନ୍ମ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ସେମାନେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ଥିଲେ, ତଥାପି ପରିବାରରେ କେତୋଟି ହିନ୍ଦୁ ରୀତିନୀତି ପାଳନ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା । ଯେପରି ସନ୍ତାନ ଜନ୍ମ ସମୟରେ ତା'ର ଜାତକ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିବା । ସେ ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ସୂଚନା ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ଗ୍ରହ ନକ୍ଷତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସ୍ଥିତି ହେତୁ ସେ ମୁଣ୍ଡବିନ୍ଧା ଓ ଶଙ୍କାକୁଳତା ଭୋଗୁଥିଲେ । ତେବେ ବହୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସେ ପାରଦର୍ଶିତା ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସଦା ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଚରିତ୍ରର ଏହି ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସାମାଜିକ ଖ୍ୟାତି ଆଣି ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଏସବୁ ତଥ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ଜନ୍ମପତ୍ରିକା ବା ଜାତକରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ଥିଲା ।

ଜଣାଯାଏ, ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ପିତା ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ଧର୍ମ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରଚୁର ପୈତୃକ ସଂପତ୍ତିରୁ ବଞ୍ଚିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ମାତା ପ୍ରସନ୍ନମୟୀ ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ମିଦିନାପୁର ଜିଲ୍ଲାର ଏହି ମଧ୍ୟବିତ୍ତ ପରିବାରର ପାଞ୍ଚଟି ସନ୍ତାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଥିଲେ ପିତାମାତାଙ୍କର ଜ୍ୟେଷ୍ଠ ସନ୍ତାନ । ତାଙ୍କ ସାନଭଉଣୀ ସୁଧାଂଶୁବାଳା ହାଜରା ଶିକ୍ଷାଜିଲ୍ଲା ପରିଦର୍ଶକ ଓ ରେଭେନ୍‌ସା ଗାର୍ଲସ୍ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲର ଅଧକ୍ଷା ରୂପେ ଅବସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ମତରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଭଉଣୀ, "ଭାରତର ପ୍ରଥମ ମହିଳା ଓକିଲ ଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଆଇନ୍ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଅଧିନିୟମ ସଂଶୋଧନରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ ।"

ଶୈଶବରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ ବାଳକମାନଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁତା ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ଏବଂ ସେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦୁଃସାହସିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ନିର୍ଭୀକତା ଓ ନିରନ୍ତର ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରିଯିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଉଥିଲେ । ଖେଳାଖେଳି ମୁଖ୍ୟତଃ ଘର ବାହାରର ଖେଳ ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ଥିଲା । ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି, "ମୁଁ ଗୁଣ୍ଡୁଚିମୂଷା ପରି ଗଛ ଚଢ଼ି ପାରୁଥିଲି ଏବଂ ସାନ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ କଞ୍ଚା ଫଳ ତୋଳୁଥିଲି । ସେହି ସାନ ସାନ ପିଲାମାନେ ମୋର ସାଙ୍ଗ ଥିଲେ ।" (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୨) ପଡ଼ୋଶୀମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରାୟ ଅଧଡଜନ ସରିକି ପାଣିଟ୍ୟାଙ୍କ୍ ଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ସନ୍ତରଣ

କରିବା ତାଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟତମ ପସନ୍ଦ ଥିଲା । ନିଜର ପିଲାଦିନକୁ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଜୀବନର ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣିମ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ ରୂପେ ଅଭିହିତ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭରୁ ହିଁ ସାଧୁତା ଓ ସତ୍ୟଶୀଳତା ଉପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କର ଅଖଣ୍ଡ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଥିଲା । ଥରେ ସେ ଅଶ୍ରୁପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନୟନରେ ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ସଂପର୍କରେ ବାପା ତାଙ୍କୁ କାହିଁକି ମିଛ କହିଲେ । ଯାବତୀୟ ଗୃହକାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ତାଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ନ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଥିଲା ଏବଂ ସେ ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ସୁସଂପାଦନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କର ସୁନ୍ଦର ଯତ୍ନ ନେଉଥିଲେ । ଘରୁ ପାଇଥିବା ଶିକ୍ଷା ତାଙ୍କୁ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଜୀବନରେ ବିଶେଷ ସହାୟକ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେ ସ୍ମୃତିଚାରଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କର ଦ୍ୱାଦଶ ଜନ୍ମତିଥିରେ ବାପା ଦେଇଥିବା 'ପାଞ୍ଚଟି ନୂଆ ରୂପା ଟଙ୍କା'ରୁ ଦୁଇଟିକୁ ପୋଷ୍ଟ ଅଫିସରେ ଏକ ଆକାଉଣ୍ଟ୍ ଖୋଲି ସେ ଜମା କରିଥିଲେ ।

ବାପାଙ୍କ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍ପର୍ଶରେ ଆସିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ବାପା ଓ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଭବାନୀପୁରର ଏଲ୍‌ଏମ୍‌ଏସ୍ କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଛାତ୍ରାବାସର ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଠରୀରେ ଏକତ୍ର ରହୁଥିଲେ । କ୍ରମଶଃ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁତା ନିବିଡ଼ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଶୈଳବାଳା ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚରେ ଉଭୟ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ଧର୍ମରେ ଦୀକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ମଧୁବାବୁ ଜଣେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ବିବାହ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଘରେ ହିଁ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଜନ୍ମଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁପରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ କଲିକତା ଛାଡ଼ି କଟକ ଚାଲି ଆସିଲେ ।

୧୮୮୮ ରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ସିମଳାରୁ ସଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ଦାସ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାକ୍ଷାତ କରି ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ କନ୍ୟା ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ପ୍ରକାଶ କଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ଏହା ପ୍ରଥମେ ଗ୍ରହଣୀୟ ହୋଇ ନଥିଲା,ତଥାପି ମାତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱର୍ଗବାସ ପରେ ୧୮୯୨ରେ ବାପା ତାଙ୍କୁ କଟକ ଆଣିଲେ । ସେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ବିବାହ କଲେ ଏବଂ ମଧୁବାବୁ ହିଁ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ସନ୍ତାନସନ୍ତତିଙ୍କ ଲାଳନପାଳନ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଲେ । ପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଆଇ.ଏ. ପରୀକ୍ଷା ପରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବିଧିବଦ୍ଧ ଭାବରେ କନ୍ୟାରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲେ । ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଏହା ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଘଟଣା ଥିଲା । ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି : ''ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀ ଝିଅଟିକୁ କନ୍ୟା ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାର ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ଯେ ପିତାଙ୍କର ବୃଥା ଯାଇ ନଥିଲା ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଈଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ କୃତଜ୍ଞ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଝିଅ ବଦଳରେ ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀ ଝିଅଟିକୁ କନ୍ୟା ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିବାରୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ଓ ସଂପର୍କୀୟଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ସମାଲୋଚିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ଆଶା ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ପୂରଣ କରିବାରେ ସମର୍ଥ ହୋଇଛି ବୋଲି ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଶଯ୍ୟାରେ ସେ ସନ୍ତୋଷ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥିଲେ ।'' (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୬)

ଶୈଳବାଳା ଲଣ୍ଡନ୍ ମିଶନ୍ ଗାର୍ଲସ୍ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରୁ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଆଠମାସ ପାଇଁ ସିମଳା ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ପରେ ସେ ବେଥୁନ୍ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି ହେଲେ । କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ ସେ ବେଶ୍ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ନେଉଥିଲେ । ସେ ପ୍ରଶସ୍ତମନା ଓ ନିରପେକ୍ଷ ବିଚାରସଂପନ୍ନ ଥିଲେ । ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ନିବାସର ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଅନ୍ତେବାସିନୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ମିଳାମିଶା ନ କରିବାକୁ ଏକଦା କଲେଜ୍‌ର ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷା ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେବାରୁ ଶୈଳବାଳା ତାହା ମାନିବାକୁ ମନା କରିଥିଲେ । ଅଧିକନ୍ତୁ ''ସେମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରୁଥିବାରୁ ସେ ମିଳାମିଶା ଅବ୍ୟାହତ ରଖିଥିଲେ । (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୭)

କିଛି ଦିନର ଅସୁସ୍ଥତା ପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା କଲିକତାର ମିଡିଲ୍‌ଟନ୍ ଷ୍ଟ୍ରିଟ୍ ସ୍ଥିତ ଲରେଟୋ କନ୍‌ଭେଣ୍ଟରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ । ସେଠାରେ ସେ ସାଂପ୍ରଦାୟିକ ପ୍ରଭାବ ମୁକ୍ତ ସିଷ୍ଟରମାନଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍ପର୍ଶରେ ଆସିଲେ । ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟବଶତଃ ସେ ବର୍ଷ ସେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଆଇ.ଏ. ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ଅକୃତକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲେ । ତା'ପରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ କଲିକତାର ଫ୍ରି ସ୍କୁଲ ଷ୍ଟ୍ରିଟ୍‌ରେ ଥିବା ଡିଭୋଟନ୍ କଲେଜ୍‌କୁ ପଠାଇ ଦିଆଗଲା । ଏବଂ ପାର୍କଷ୍ଟ୍ରିଟ୍‌ରେ ଥିବା ୟଙ୍ଗ୍ ଉଇମେନ୍‌ସ୍ ଇନ୍‌ଷ୍ଟିଚ୍ୟୁଟ୍‌ର ହଷ୍ଟେଲରେ ସେ ରହିଲେ । କିଛିବର୍ଷ ପରେ ସେଠାକାର ଜଣେ ମୁସ୍‌ଲିମ୍ ସହପାଠୀ ଖ୍ୱାଜା ମହମ୍ମଦ ନୂରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କର ସାକ୍ଷାତ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ନୂର୍ ମହାଶୟ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର କୁଳପତି ଓ ବିଧାନସଭାର ସଭାପତି ଥା'ନ୍ତି ।

ପରବର୍ଷ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଆଇ.ଏ. ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ଉତ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହେଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ବାପା ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କର ଇଚ୍ଛା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ସେ ଆଉ ବି.ଏ. ନ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କଲେ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ପିତା ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ରହୁଥା'ନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ନିମନ୍ତେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ୍ ଯାତ୍ରା କରିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦିଆଯାଇଥାଏ । ଶୈଳବାଳା ପିତାଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ୍ରମେ କଟକ ଆସି ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଓ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ଅନାମ ଚରଣ ଦାସ ହେପାଜତ୍‌ରେ ରହିଲେ ।

୧୮୯୭ ମସିହାରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ୍ ଯାତ୍ରା କଲେ । କଟକଠାରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କର ଉତ୍ତମ ଯତ୍ନ ନିଆଯାଉଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ସହଶିକ୍ଷା ଅନୁଗୃହୀତ ହେଉ ନଥାଏ । ମାତ୍ର ଅତ୍ୟୁତ୍ସାହୀ ଶୈଳବାଳା ବେଥୁନ୍ କଲେଜ୍‌ର ତାଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ପୂର୍ବତନ ସହପାଠିନୀ କୁମାରୀ ଇସାବେଲା ସାମୁଏଲ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ରାମେଶ୍ୱରବାଇ କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ ନାମ ଲେଖାଇବାକୁ ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତାଇଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ସଫଳ ହେଲା । କଲେଜ୍ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଯଦିଓ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ ବହୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲା, ତଥାପି ତାଙ୍କର ''ପ୍ରକୃତ ଶିକ୍ଷା'' ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ପାଠାଗାରରୁ ହିଁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେଲା ବୋଲି ସେ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେଠାରେ ସେ ଏକ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ବର୍ଗର ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିଲେ ଏବଂ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବିଷୟରେ ଆଳାପ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିପାରିଲେ ।

ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଏପରି ଅନେକ ଘଟଣାର ଅବତାରଣା କରାଯାଇଛି ଯହିଁରୁ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱଭାବର ସାହସ, ନିର୍ଭୀକତା ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ, ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର ବିରୋଧରେ ସ୍ୱର ଉତ୍ତୋଳନ କରିବାର ପ୍ରବଣତା ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ ହୁଏ । ଉଦାହରଣସ୍ୱରୂପ ଗୋଟିଏ ଘଟଣାର ଅବତାରଣା କରାଯାଇପାରେ; ୧୮୯୮ରେ ବେଙ୍ଗଲ୍-ନାଗପୁର ରେଳପଥ (BNR) ରେଳପଥ ସଂଯୋଗୀକରଣ ପାଇଁ ସେତୁବନ୍ଧ ନିର୍ମାଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ପୂର୍ବରୁ କଲିକତାରୁ କଟକ ଆସିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଷ୍ଟିମର ଯୋଗେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଚାନ୍ଦପାଲ ଘାଟରୁ କୋଲାଘାଟ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆସିବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା । ଦିନେ କୋଲାଘାଟରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଟ୍ରେନ୍ ଧରିଲେ; ମାତ୍ର ଫାଷ୍ଟକ୍ଲାସ୍ କଂପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟରେ ଥିବା ଦଳେ ୟୁରୋପୀୟ ସହଯାତ୍ରୀ ମନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଦେଲେ, ''ଜଣେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟା ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମେମ୍‌ସାହେବମାନେ ଏକତ୍ର ଯିବାକୁ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିବେ ନାହିଁ ।'' ଶୈଳବାଳା ଏହାର ଦୃଢ଼ ପ୍ରତିବାଦ କଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାଦାନୁବାଦ ହେଲା । ଏତିକି ନୁହେଁ ସେ ଜିଦ୍ କରିଲେ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କ ଆୟାମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେହି ପ୍ରଥମଶ୍ରେଣୀ କଂପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟରେ ଯାତ୍ରା କରିବେ । ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଦୃଢ଼ୋକ୍ତି ଥିଲା, ''ମୁଁ ଜଣେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ମହିଳା ଏବଂ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଗର୍ବିତ ।'' (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୧୨) ଏହି ଘଟଣା ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ ପରିଚ୍ଛେଦର ଶେଷଆଡ଼କୁ ସେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ସେପରି ସାଂପ୍ରଦାୟିକ ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଉତ୍‌ଥାପନ କରିଥିଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କଟକ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ମାଜିଷ୍ଟ୍ରେଟ୍ ଓ ଜିଲ୍ଲାଜଜ୍ ରହିଥିଲେ ।

ପୁନଶ୍ଚ ପୁସ୍ତକଟିରେ ଆହୁରି ଅନେକ ଘଟଣା ସନ୍ନିବେଶିତ ଯେଉଁଥିରୁ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କର ମାନସିକ ପ୍ରବୃତ୍ତି ଓ ହୃଦୟବତ୍ତାର ପରିଚୟ ମିଳିଥାଏ । ଏହା ସତ୍ୟ ଯେ ସେସବୁ ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା ସ୍ୱବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଅତିରଞ୍ଜନ ପରି ମନେହୁଏ । ଏକ ପ୍ରକାରର ଆତ୍ମଶ୍ଳାଘା ଓ ସ୍ୱବିବେଚିତ ଯଥାର୍ଥତାକୁ ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ ଦେଉଥିବା ପରି ଲାଗେ । ବାସ୍ତବ ଘଟଣା ସହିତ ସେସବୁର ତୁଳନା କଷ୍ଟସାଧ୍ୟ ମନେହୁଏ । ତଥାପି ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ସମକାଳୀନ ବହୁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କର ଅସାଧାରଣ ଆଦର୍ଶବାଦିତା ଓ ସାଧୁତା ସଂପର୍କରେ ନିଃସନ୍ଦେହ ।

ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀର 'Entry into the Jagannath Temple' ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ପୁରୀର ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରିଥିବାରୁ ଉପୁଜିଥିବା ବିବାଦ ଓ ଗୁଞ୍ଜରଣ ସଂପର୍କରେ ନିଷ୍କପଟ ଭାବରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଅନୁଭବୀ ହୋଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟବେକ୍ଷଣ ତାଙ୍କ ମନର ଯାବତୀୟ ଭାବନାର ପ୍ରତିଫଳନ ପରି ମନେହୁଏ; ନିଷେଧାଦେଶ ସହିତ ସାଲିସ୍ କରିଯିବା ପୁଣି ଧର୍ମାନ୍ଧତା ଓ କୁସଂସ୍କାରକୁ ବିରୋଧ କରିବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ଏବଂ ଶେଷରେ ବିବାଦୀୟ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିବାରୁ ଓ ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ବଦନାମ କରିଥିବାର ଅନୁତାପ ଆଦି ଭାବ ଓ ଭାବନାର ସମ୍ମିଶ୍ରଣ ସେ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ ।

ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଇତିହାସର କେତୋଟି ଘଟଣା ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ସନ୍ନିବେଶିତ । ଯେପରି ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି, ୧୯୦୩ ମସିହାରେ ବାପା ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ କଂଗ୍ରେସ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ମୟୂରଭଞ୍ଜ ମହାରାଜା, ଅନ୍ୟ କେତେଜଣ ହିତୈଷୀ ଓ ସମର୍ଥକମାନଙ୍କ ସହାୟତାରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଗଠନ କଲେ । ସେହିପରି ଶୈଳବାଳା ମଧ୍ୟ ପିତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ପାଇ ଗଢ଼ିଲେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଯୁବ ସଂଗଠନ । ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟର ଛାତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କଠାରେ ଯେଉଁ ଆତୁରତା ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୁଏ ଶୈଳବାଳା କିନ୍ତୁ ତାହାର ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ଥିଲେ ।

ଏହାପରେ ଆସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ଯାତ୍ରାକାଳୀନ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା । ୧୭ ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ୧୯୦୬ ମସିହାରେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ଶିକ୍ଷାନବିସ କୁମାରୀ ସରଳାବାଳା ମିତ୍ର ଓ ଫାତିମା ଫାୟଗୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସେ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଥିଲେ । ମାରିଆ ଗ୍ରେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଥମ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଉତ୍ସାହଜନକ ନଥିଲା । ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି, ''ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋକ-ଉଦ୍‌ଭାସିତ ଭାରତ ଭୂମିର ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳତା ନିକଟରେ ସବୁକିଛି ସେଠାରେ ଅନ୍ଧକାରମୟ, ଉଦାସ ଓ ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ୱହୀନ ମନେହେଉଥିଲା । ମାରିଆ ଗ୍ରେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ କଲେଜ୍ ହଷ୍ଟେଲର କୋଠରୀ ଭିତରକୁ ପଶିଯାଇଁ ଆମେ ତିନିଜଣ ବିଛଣାରେ ପଡ଼ି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପରି କାନ୍ଦି ଉଠିଲୁ ।'' (ପୃଷ୍ଠା—୨୧)

ସେହି ପ୍ରଶିକ୍ଷଣ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦୁଇଟି ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ଉତ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହେଲେ ଏବଂ ଭାରତ ଫେରି ଆସିଲେ । ଶେଷ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ତହିଁ ପରବର୍ଷ ସେ ପୁଣି ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ବାହୁଡ଼ି ଯିବା କଥା, ମାତ୍ର ଏସବୁ ବିଷୟରେ ଅଧିକ କିଛି ତାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରୁ ବୁଝିହୁଏ ନାହିଁ ।

ଇଂଲାଣ୍ଡ ରହଣିକାଳରେ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନଚର୍ଯ୍ୟା, ସମାଜ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସଂପର୍କରେ ସେ ବହୁ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ରଚନା କରିଥିଲେ । ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କେତୋଟି ବିଶ୍ୱନାଥ କରଙ୍କର ସୁଖ୍ୟାତ 'ଉତ୍କଳ ସାହିତ୍ୟ'ରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଥିଲା । ଏକ ଅଜଣା ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସହିତ ନିଜ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ତୁଳନାତ୍ମକ ତଥା ନିରପେକ୍ଷ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ ଏସବୁ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧରେ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଶଂସା କରିଥିବାବେଳେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଔପନିବେଶବାଦକୁ ଦୃଢ଼ ସମାଲୋଚନା ମଧ୍ୟ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ବିଚାରାଳୟ, ରାଜତନ୍ତ୍ର, ହାଉସ୍ ଅଫ୍ ଲର୍ଡ଼ସ, ଇଣ୍ଡିଆ ଅଫିସ୍, ବକିଂମ୍‌ହୋମ ପ୍ୟାଲେସ୍ ଏବଂ ମହାମାନ୍ୟ ପୋପ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କ ସାକ୍ଷାତକାର ବିଷୟରେ ସେ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । କେତୋଟି ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ୍ ପରିବାରରେ ସେ ସପ୍ତାହାନ୍ତ ଦିନଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଅତିବାହିତ କରି ପରିବାରରେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ ସେବକମାନଙ୍କ ସମୟାନୁବର୍ତ୍ତିତା ଓ ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତତାରେ ପ୍ରୀତ ହୋଇ ସେମାନେ ଆମ ଦେଶ ତୁଳନାରେ ଭଲ ବୋଲି ଶୈଳବାଳା ମନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ।

କଟକ ଫେରି ଆସି ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସେ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ । ଏହି ମର୍ମରେ ସେ ରେଭେନ୍‌ସା ଗାର୍ଲସ୍ ସ୍କୁଲ୍‌ର ଅଧକ୍ଷା ପଦ ଅଳଙ୍କୃତ କରି

ବିଶେଷକ୍ଷମତାପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ସଂପାଦିକା ରୂପେ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ବିକାଶ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗୀୟ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷଙ୍କ ଉଦାସୀନତା ବିରୋଧରେ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ କରିଥିଲେ । ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ତାଙ୍କରି ବଦାନ୍ୟତା ହେତୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ମହିଳା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ହୋଇଥିଲା । ୧୯୧୪ ମସିହାରେ ରାଞ୍ଚିଠାରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଶୀର୍ଷକ ଏକ ଅଧିବେଶନକୁ ସେ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରେ ଶିକ୍ଷକତା କରିବାକୁ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେ ତାଲିମ୍ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ଏତାଦୃଶ ଅବଦାନର ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ବିହାରର ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଶେଷ ଲେଫ୍‌ଟନାଣ୍ଟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣର ସାର୍ ଏଡ୍‌ୱାର୍ଡ୍ ଗେଟ୍ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ 'କାଇଜର-ଇ-ହିନ୍ଦ' ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣପଦକରେ ଭୂଷିତ କରିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କରିଥିଲେ, ମାତ୍ର ଶୈଳବାଳା ତାହା ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାକୁ ମନା କରିଦେଇଥିଲେ । ସର୍ବଭାରତୀୟ ମହିଳା ଅଧିବେଶନରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ପୁରୀ ଓ ବାଲେଶ୍ୱରରେ ଶାଖା ସଙ୍ଗଠନ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ବିହାରର ପାଟନା ମଧ୍ୟ କିଛିକାଳ ଧରି ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ କର୍ମଭୂମି ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେ ଏସବୁର ଅବତାରଣ କରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ବିତାଇଥିବା ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ସହିତ ତୁଳନା ମଧ୍ୟ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ରାଜ୍ୟ ତୁଳନାରେ ବିହାରର ଜନସାଧାରଣ ଅଧିକ ରକ୍ଷଣଶୀଳ । ରାଜ୍ୟର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଘଟଣାବଳୀ; ଯଥା : ସୋନ୍‌ପୁର ମେଳା, ୱେଲ୍‌ସ୍ ଯୁବରାଜଙ୍କ ପରିଦର୍ଶନ, ସରକାରୀ ଭବନରେ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦା ପାର୍ଟି, ବିହାର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମହିଳା ପରିଷଦ, ଲେଡି ଷ୍ଟିଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ହଲଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପାଣି ସଂଗ୍ରହ ଓ ବିହାର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଧାନ ପରିଷଦ ସଂପର୍କରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ତଥ୍ୟ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରାଯାଇଛି । ଭାରତର ପ୍ରଥମ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର କ୍ଷମତାପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ମାଜିଷ୍ଟ୍ରେଟ୍ ରୂପେ ସ୍ୱଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାର କଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଲିପିବଦ୍ଧ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କେତୋଟି ଘଟଣା ବେଶ୍ ହାସ୍ୟରସାତ୍ମକ ଓ ଗମ୍ଭୀର; ଯେପରି ମୁଖ୍ୟ ବିଚାରପତି ଓ ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳଙ୍କ ପୂଝାରୀକୁ ଜୋରିମାନା, ଇଲେକ୍‌ସନ୍ ପିଟିସନ୍ କେଶ୍ ଓ ଦେବାଳିଆ ହେଲେ ତା'ର ବିଚାର ପ୍ରମୁଖ । 'University Activities' ବିଭାଗରେ ସିନେଟ୍‌କୁ ଫେଲୋ ରୂପେ ତାଙ୍କର ମନୋନୟନ, ମ୍ୟୁଜିକ ବୋର୍ଡ଼ ଗଠନ, ସିଣ୍ଡିକେଟ୍‌କୁ ତାଙ୍କର ନିର୍ବାଚନ, ଭାଇସରାୟଙ୍କର ପରିଦର୍ଶନ, ଆଇ.ଏ. ଛାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବୃତ୍ତି ପ୍ରଦାନ, ଗୃହବିଜ୍ଞାନ-ଅର୍ଥନୀତି-ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷା, ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ବୋର୍ଡ଼ ଗଠନ ବିଷୟାଦି ଶୈଳବାଳା ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

SPCA ର ଗଠନ ଏବଂ ସେ କିପରି ମ୍ୟୁନ୍‌ସିପାଲ୍ କମିଶନ ରୂପେ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେଲେ ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ । ରେଳବିଭାଗ ଓ ଜେଲ୍ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପରେ ଅଂଶଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ରାଜନୈତିକ ବନ୍ଦୀ ଓ ଅସହଯୋଗ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ସହ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କ ସାହସିକତାର ବିବରଣୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଲାଲ୍ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧି ସାଇମନ୍ କମିଶନକୁ ବିରୋଧ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା ବେଶ୍ ରୋମାଞ୍ଚକର । ସେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ସ୍ଥାନ ସଂରକ୍ଷଣକୁ ସେ ସମର୍ଥନ କରୁଥିଲେ ଏବଂ

ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ସଂରକ୍ଷିତ ନ ଥିବା ଭିନ୍ନ ନିର୍ବାଚନ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀକୁ ସେ ସମର୍ଥନ କରୁ ନଥିଲେ । (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୧୧୯)

ଏହାପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ୧୯୨୭ ମସିହାରେ ତାଙ୍କର କଟକ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାବର୍ତ୍ତନର ସ୍ମୃତିଚାରଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେତେବେଳେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ଘର ନିଲାମ୍ ହେବ ବୋଲି ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇସାରିଥାଏ । ସେ ଋଣଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥା'ନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ତାଙ୍କ ଶିଳ୍ପ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାନ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ପଡ଼ିଥାଏ । ଶିଳ୍ପ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାନର ପୁନରୁତ୍‌ଥାନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ସେ ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ ୧୯୨୪ରେ ଅହମ୍ମଦାବାଦ୍ ଯାତ୍ରା କରିଥିଲେ ।

ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଯେତେବେଳେ କଟକ ଆସିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ପାଖେ ରହି ସୁବିଧା ଅସୁବିଧା ବୁଝିବାକୁ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ ପିତା ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କଟକ ଟାଉନହଲ୍‌ଠାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସଭାର ଆୟୋଜନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା ଏବଂ ମାତ୍ର ଷାଠିଏ ଟଙ୍କା ସଂଗୃହୀତ ହୋଇଥିଲା ଯାହା ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କୁ ନିରାଶ କରିଥିଲା । ସେଦିନ ରାତିରେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ଘରେ ମହାତ୍ମାଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କୁ ଚରଖା ଚଲାଇବାକୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଚରଖା ପ୍ରଚଳନ କରିବାକୁ କହିଥିଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ଶୈଳବାଳା ଏଥିରେ ସମ୍ମତ ହେଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଭାରତର ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ ସଙ୍କଟ ଯେ ଚରଖା ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦୂର ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ଏ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ତାଙ୍କର ନାହିଁ ବୋଲି ମତ ଦେଲେ । ଯେଉଁ କୃଷକମାନେ ତୁଳା ଉତ୍ପାଦନ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ନିଜ ପାଇଁ ଶାଢ଼ୀ, ଧୋତି, ଗାମୁଛା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବୁଣୁଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କେବଳ 'ଚରଖା' ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ହୋଇପାରେ, ମଧ୍ୟବିତ୍ତ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚମଧ୍ୟବିତ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ନୁହେଁ । (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୧୩୨) ସେହିପରି ଖଦଡ଼ ବ୍ୟବହାରକୁ ପ୍ରୋତ୍ସାହନ ଦେବା ସପକ୍ଷରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ନ ଥିଲେ । ସେ କହିଥିଲେ, ''ମୁଁ ଦୁଃଖୀତ; ଏ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ମୋତେ ଉତ୍ସାହଜନକ ଲାଗୁନାହିଁ । ଆପଣ ଯଦି ବିଦେଶୀ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ ବର୍ଜନକଥା ଆନ୍ତରିକତାର ସହ କହୁଛନ୍ତି,ତେବେ ମୋଟରକାର୍, ଘଣ୍ଟା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରୁଛନ୍ତି କାହିଁକି ? ଆପଣ ସେସବୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ବର୍ଜନ କରିବା ଉଚିତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଆମେ ସେପରି କରିପାରିବା ନାହିଁ ।'' ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ପ୍ରୀତ ହେଲା ପରି ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଲେ ନାହିଁ, ମାତ୍ର କଂଗ୍ରେସର ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବାପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଜଣାଇଥିଲେ । ଶୈଳବାଳା ତାହାକୁ ସ୍ୱାଗତ କରି ସାବରମତୀ ଯିବାପାଇଁ କଥା ଦେଇଥିଲେ ।

୧୯୪୧ ବେଳକୁ ଶୈଳବାଳା କଟକରେ, ଅନେକ ସମାଜ ସଂସ୍କାରମୂଳକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହାତକୁ ନେଇଥା'ନ୍ତି । ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ମାତୃତ୍ୱ ଓ ଶିଶୁବିକାଶ ଯୋଜନା ଅନ୍ୟତମ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନାରୀ ସେବା ସଂଘ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିଥିଲେ । ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପରେ ସରକାରଙ୍କର ବହୁ କଂଗ୍ରେସ ନେତା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପରିଦର୍ଶନ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ବଲ୍ଲଭଭାଇ ପଟେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଗସ୍ତ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ତତ୍‌କାଳୀନ ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳ ଡଃ. କାଟ୍‌ଜୁଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆୟୋଜିତ ଏକ

ଚା' ଭୋଜିରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଡଃ. କାଟ୍‌ଜୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର୍ ବଲ୍ଲଭ ଭାଇ ପଟେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରିଚୟ କରାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ସେହିପରି ଲର୍ଡ୍ ମାଉଣ୍ଟବେଟେନ୍ ଓ ଲେଡି ମାଉଣ୍ଟବେଟେନ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆଗମନ ସମୟରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୈଳବାଳା ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ କରିଥିଲେ । ଭାରତର ପ୍ରଥମ ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଜବାହାରଲାଲ ନେହେରୁଙ୍କ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆଗମନ କଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ଲିପିବଦ୍ଧ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ୧୯୪୭ ନଭେମ୍ବର ମାସରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ପୌରୋହିତ୍ୟରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଜାତୀୟ ମହିଳା ପରିଷଦର ଦ୍ୱିବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ କଟକଠାରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହୋଇଥିଲା ।

ପୁସ୍ତକର ପଞ୍ଚମ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ କଟକ ସଂପର୍କରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କଥା ଶୈଳବାଳା ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି; ଯୌବନାବସ୍ଥାରେ ସେ ଦେଖିଥିବା କଟକ ଏବଂ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ସେ ଆହରଣ କରିଥିବା ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାର କଥା ଏହି ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ । ପାଟନା ଓ ସେଠାକାର ବନ୍ଧୁବର୍ଗ ତଥା ଶତ୍ରୁମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଲେଖିବାକୁ ଭୁଲି ନାହାଁନ୍ତି । ବିଶେଷତଃ, ଜୀବନରେ ଅନୁଭବିଥିବା ଅକୃତଜ୍ଞତା ତାଙ୍କୁ କଷ୍ଟ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଯେପରି, ସେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି, ''ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ନ କହି ମୁଁ ରହି ପାରିବିନି ଯେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ସମାଜସଂସ୍କାର କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ମୁଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାପାଇଁ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଆଦର ପାଇନାହିଁ । ମୋର ଜାତୀୟତା ସମ୍ଭବତଃ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ହୋଇଛି । ମୋ ପ୍ରତି ମୋ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଅବହେଳାର ଏହା ଏକ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ।'' (ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୧୬୧) ସେମିତି ଜଣେ ସଂପର୍କୀୟଙ୍କ ଅକୃତଜ୍ଞ ଆଚରଣ କଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ପର ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି : ''ଅନେକଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଅପ୍ରତ୍ୟାଶିତ ସ୍ନେହ, ସହୃଦୟତା ଓ କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ ।''

୧୯୩୪ ବେଳକୁ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଥାନ୍ତି । ବିହାରର ଭୂମିକଂପ ପୀଡ଼ିତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ରିଲିଫ୍ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇଥିବା ଶୈଳବାଳା ସେହିବର୍ଷ ଜାନୁଆରୀରେ ସେଠାରୁ ଫେରିଆସିଲେ । ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ପିତାଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ପାଖେ ସେ ରହୁଥା'ନ୍ତି । ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁଶଯ୍ୟାରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ତାଙ୍କୁ କଥା ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଯେ ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ରହିବେ । ''ଜୀବନର ଶେଷ ସମୟ ମୁଁ ଏହିଠାରେ ହିଁ ଅତିବାହିତ କରିବି । ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପରିସରକୁ ସୀମିତ କରିଦେବି । ୧୯୩୪ ମସିହା ଫେବୃୟାରୀ ୪ ତାରିଖ ଅପରାହ୍ନ ଗୋଟାଏ ବେଳକୁ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଇହଲୀଳା ସମ୍ବରଣ କଲେ । ଶୈଳବାଳା ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଇଥିବା ବଚନ ରକ୍ଷା କଲେ । ସେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତିରକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ବହୁ ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରିଥିଲେ । ପିତାଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କର ସାମାଜିକ, ରାଜନୈତିକ ଓ ପ୍ରଶାସନିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପୁଣି ପୂର୍ବପରି ଚାଲିଲା । ୧୯୩୬ ମସିହାରେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠିତ ହେଲା । ମଧୁସ୍ମୃତି ପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କର ଉଦ୍ୟମ, ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ନିମନ୍ତେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କର ବାସଗୃହ ଓ ସଂପତ୍ତି ଦାନ କରିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ କରିପାରିଛି । ସେ ଓ ସାନଭଉଣୀ ସୁଧାଂଶୁବାଳା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପିତାଙ୍କ ଆଇନ୍ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତୀୟ ପାଠାଗାରଟିକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ହାଇ କୋର୍ଟକୁ ଉପହାର ସ୍ୱରୂପ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀରେ ସଂଯୋଜିତ ବହୁ ନେତୃସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ଯେପରି ଆଇନଜ୍ଞ ଡଃ. ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ସିହ୍ନା ଓ ସରଦାର୍ ବଲ୍ଲଭଭାଇ ପଟେଲ୍ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ପତ୍ରାଳାପରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ଅଙ୍ଗୀକାରବଦ୍ଧତାର ପରିଚୟ ମିଳିଥାଏ । ବିଶେଷତଃ ଷଢ଼େଇଖଳା ଓ ଖରସୁଆଁ ମିଶ୍ରଣ ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖନୀୟ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରବଳ ବିରୋଧ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ଏହି ଦୁଇ ଆଦିବାସୀ ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡ ବିହାର ହାତକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲା ।

ଶୈଳବାଳାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନର ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଘଟଣା, ୧୯୫୨ ମସିହାରେ ସେ ରାଜ୍ୟସଭା ସଦସ୍ୟ ହେଲେ । ସାଂସଦ ଭାବରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସଂପର୍କରେ ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀଚରିତରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ୧୯୫୨ ମସିହା ଏପ୍ରିଲ୍ ୨୮ ତାରିଖରେ ତାଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ନାମିତ ହୋଇ ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହିଳା କଲେଜ୍ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଲା । ତାଙ୍କ ଅଭିଭାଷଣରେ ସେ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ମହାନତା, ପିତା ହିସାବରେ ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ନିଜର ସଂପର୍କ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମଧୁସ୍ମୃତିର ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱର କଥା କହିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ବକ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଶେଷ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ଆଶା ପ୍ରକଟ କରିଥିଲେ :

‘‘ଏହି ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଯେଉଁ ଝିଅମାନେ ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରିବେ ଏବଂ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ପିଢ଼ିର ଜନନୀ ହେବେ ସେମାନେ ସର୍ବଦା ସେ ମଣିଷଟିକୁ ସ୍ମରଣ କରିବେ, ଯିଏ ତା'ର ସମଗ୍ର ଜୀବନ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସେବାରେ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିଥିଲା । ସେମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ମାତୃଭୂମିର ସେବା ଲାଗି ଜୀବନ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିବେ ।’’ (ପରିଶିଷ୍ଟ ପୃଷ୍ଠା-୨୦)

ଶୈଳବାଳା ଜୀବନବ୍ୟାପୀ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର ଦିଗରେ ଉତ୍ସାହୀ ଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ରଚନା ଏସବୁର ନିଦର୍ଶନ । ଏହି ମର୍ମରେ ‘‘Ways of Spreading Women's Education’’ ଶୀର୍ଷକରେ ସେ ଏକ ଉପାଦେୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନିବନ୍ଧ ରଚନା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହି ରଚନାଟିରେ ସେ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଓ ତା'ର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ସଂପର୍କରେ ନିଜସ୍ୱ ଅଭିମତ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ତାଲିମ, ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଅଧିବାସୀଙ୍କ ସହାୟତାରେ ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି, ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗର ସହଯୋଗ, ପରଦା ପ୍ରଥାର ବିମୋଚନ ଓ ଜାତିଭେଦର ବିଲୋପ ତଥା ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦାନ ଆଦି ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଉପରେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଉକ୍ତ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧରେ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱାରୋପ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ‘‘ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଆଚରଣ ମାତୃସୁଲଭ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । ଛାତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଉତ୍ତମ ସଂପର୍କ ରକ୍ଷା କରି ପାରିଲେ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଜନ ସମର୍ଥନ ଓ ସହଯୋଗ ଲାଭ କରିବ ।’’

ପରିଶେଷରେ ଏହା ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଯେ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର ପାଇଁ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖନୀୟ ଅବଦାନ ହେତୁ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଆମର ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ହୋଇ ରହିବେ । ୧୯୬୮ ମସିହାରେ ତାଙ୍କର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଘଟିଲା ।

ପ୍ରଫେସର ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ମହାନ୍ତି



ସୂଚିପତ୍ର





କୁଳବୃଦ୍ଧ ମଧୁସୂଦନ

ଜନସାଧାରଣରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାରର ଉପାୟ

ଆଜିକାଲି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସମାଜରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବିଶେଷରୂପେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଅଛୁଁ । ଏହି ଅଭାବ ଧନୀ ଓ ନିର୍ଧନ ଉଭୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଲୋକେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ନବଜାଗରଣ ଦେଖୁଅଛୁଁ ଏବଂ ଦେଶର ପଲ୍ଲୀଗ୍ରାମମାନଙ୍କରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଲୋକେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ସକାଶେ ଚିତ୍କାର କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ।

୧୮୫୪ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ; ମାତ୍ର ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖର କଥା ଯେ, ଗତ ବାଷଠି ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ଫଳ ବଡ଼ ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଉଥିବା ବାଳକ ବାଳିକାଙ୍କର ଅନୁପାତ ୫ଜଣରେ ଏକଜଣ ଅଟେ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଅବଶ୍ୟ କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ସହିତ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିବୁ ଯେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଏଥିରେ ହାତ ଦେଇନଥିଲେ ପୂର୍ବେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଯେପରି ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଥିଲା, ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେହିପରି ଥାନ୍ତା । ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଚେଷ୍ଟାକରି ନଥିଲେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଯେଉଁ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଉନ୍ନତି ହୋଇଅଛି, ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ନଥାନ୍ତା । ତଥାପି ଏହା ଦେଖାଇ ଦେବା ଉଚିତ ଯେ, ବାଳକମାନଙ୍କ ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଯେପରି ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଅଛନ୍ତି, ତହିଁର ଦଶମାଂଶ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଏବଂ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କର ଶିକ୍ଷା ଏକ ଗୁରୁତର ବିଷୟ । ସୀମାବଦ୍ଧ ସଂସ୍କାର, ରୀତିନୀତି ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ଓ ଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଏହାକୁ ଅଧିକତର ଜଟିଳ କରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ସେହି ସବୁ ବିଷୟରେ ଅବତାରଣା କରି ଏଠାରେ ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କର ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ କରିବୁ ନାହିଁ । କି ଉପାୟରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଜନସାଧାରଣରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହେବ, ଏହାହିଁ ଆଜି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆଲୋଚନାର ବିଷୟ । ଆହୁରି ମଧ୍ୟ କି ଉପାୟରେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ଅଭାବ ପୂରଣ କରି ପାରିବେ ଏବଂ କି ଉପାୟରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଶିକ୍ଷାପଦ୍ଧତିର ଦୋଷ ସଂଶୋଧନ କରିବାକୁ ହେବ, ଏହା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆଲୋଚନାର ବିଷୟ । ସମସ୍ତ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଘେନି ବିଶେଷ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଲାଗିଅଛି । ଏପରି କି, ବିଲାତ ନିବାସୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପକ୍ଷପାତି କେତେକ ସମ୍ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଓ ମହିଳାମଧ୍ୟ ଏ ବିଷୟ ନେଇ ଭାରତସଚିବଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଗତବର୍ଷ ସାକ୍ଷାତ କରିଥିଲେ । ଗତ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ମାସ ୩୧ ତାରିଖରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବୋମ୍ବାଇଠାରେ ଥିବା ସମୟରେ ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ସଭା ହୋଇ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ବଡ଼ଲାଟ ସାହେବଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଆବେଦନପତ୍ର ପଠାହୋଇଥିଲା । ସୁଖର କଥା, ଏହିସବୁ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନଦ୍ୱାରା ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ପ୍ରତି ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଅଛି ଏବଂ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ କି କି ତ୍ରୁଟି

ଅଛି, ତାହା ବିବେଚନା କରିବା ସକାଶେ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ପତ୍ର ଆସିଅଛି । ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭ ଏ ଦେଶରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ପଦ୍ଧତି ଆଶାନୁରୂପ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳାବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଏ ବିଷୟ ଭଲରୂପେ ଚିନ୍ତାକରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନେ ମନେ କରିପାରନ୍ତି ଯେ, ଆମ୍ଭ ଦେଶରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଭଲରୂପେ ଗତି କରୁଅଛି ଏବଂ ତାହାର ଉନ୍ନତି ସକାଶେ କିଛି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନାହିଁ । ଏଥିରେ ଯେ କୌଣସି ତ୍ରୁଟି ଅଛି, ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନେ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏଣୁ ଏ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କିମ୍ବା ସହାନୁଭୂତି ସେମାନେ ପାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଯେତେଦିନଯାଏ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ଲାଭ କରିନପାରିବେ, ତେତେଦିନ ଯାଏ ଏ ଦେଶରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଅଗ୍ରସର ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ମତ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ ।

୧୮୮୨ ମସିହାରେ ଯେଉଁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସମିତି ବସିଥିଲା, ତହିଁରେ ସେମାନେ ଏହିପରି ମତ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଯେ, ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ମତ ଗ୍ରହଣ ନକରି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାରର ଯେ ନାନା ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ଅଛି, ତାହା ଦୂର କରାଯାଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ସୁତରାଂ ଦେଖାଯାଏ, ସାଧାରଣ ମତକୁ ଅବହେଳା କଲେ ଚଳିବ ନାହିଁ । ମାତ୍ର ଆଜିଯାଏ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ଆଦୌ ଏଥିପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଦେଇନାହାନ୍ତି । ଧର୍ମଗତ, ଜାତିଗତ ଓ ସାମାଜିକ ରୀତିନିତି ଏବଂ ସଂସ୍କାରଜନିତ ନାନା ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ଥିବା ସ୍ଥଳେ ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ଏକ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀରେ ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବାର କଳ୍ପନା କରିବା ନିତାନ୍ତ ଅସଙ୍ଗତ ଅଟେ । ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶରେ ଏସବୁ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ନାହିଁ, ସେଠାରେ ଏପ୍ରକାର ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଚଳିପାରେ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡକୁ ନିଆଯାଇ ପାରେ । ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭ ଏଦେଶରେ ଯେଉଁ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ଅଛି, ସେ ଦେଶରେ ଯଦିବା ତାହାସବୁ ନାହିଁ, ତଥାପି ସେଠାରେ ଏକ ନିୟମରେ ସବୁଠାରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯାଏ ନାହିଁ । ସେଠାରେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ସ୍କୁଲ ସକାଶେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରାଯାଏ । ତହିଁର କାରଣ ଏହି ଯେ, ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ସାମାଜିକ ଅବସ୍ଥାନୁରୂପ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ସ୍ଥିର କରାଯାଏ ଏବଂ ସେହି କାରଣରୁ ଜନସାଧାରଣ ତହିଁର ପକ୍ଷପାତୀ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯଦିଚ ଏକ ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ବାସ କରୁଅଛୁଁ, ତଥାପି ରୀତିନୀତି ଓ ସାମାଜିକ ସଂସ୍କାର ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଘେନି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ନାନା ବୈଷମ୍ୟ ଅଛି । ତାହାହେଲେ ହେଁ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗର ନିୟମାନୁସାରେ ବିହାର, ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ଛୋଟନାଗପୁର ସମସ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଏକ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀରେ ଚାଳିତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସୁଖର କଥା, ଏଥିପ୍ରତି ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ପଡ଼ିଅଛି । ଏ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କୁ ଯେଉଁ ପତ୍ର ଦେଇଅଛନ୍ତି, ତହିଁର କିୟଦଂଶ ଉଦ୍ଧୃତ କଲୁଁ । ''ଏଥିରେ କିଛି ସନ୍ଦେହ ନାହିଁ ଯେ, ସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ବାଳିକାମାନେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ମାତୃଭାଷାରେ ଲେଖି ପଢ଼ି ପାରିବେ ଓ ଅଙ୍କ କଷି ପାରିବେ । ମାତ୍ର ଏସବୁ ଛଡ଼ା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ

ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବାକୁ ଗଲେ ସେଥିସକାଶେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ଏବଂ ତହିଁରେ ଉନ୍ନତି ଦେଖାଇବାକୁ ହେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଏ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରି ତଦନୁସାରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ କରାଇବା ଆଦୌ ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ ନୁହେଁ । ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ପାଠ୍ୟବିଷୟ ସ୍ଥିର କରିଦେବେ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମିତି ତହିଁ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ନିଜ ନିଜ ମତ ଅନୁସାରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗର ପରାମର୍ଶ ସହିତ ହେଉ ଅବା ବିନା ପରାମର୍ଶରେ ହେଉ ପ୍ରୟୋଜନାନୁରୂପ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରି ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିନେବେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାର ଯେତେବେଳେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ, ସେତେବେଳେ ପ୍ରୟୋଜନ ଅନୁସାରେ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିବାରେ ବାଧାଦେବା ଆଦୌ ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ ନୁହେଁ ।''

ଉପରେ ଉଦ୍ଧୃତାଂଶରୁ ଜଣାଯାଉଅଛି ଯେ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାର ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କି କି ତ୍ରୁଟି ଅଛି, ତାହା ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଅବଶେଷରେ ବୁଝି ପାରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମିତିଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବାକୁ ସେ ଚାହାନ୍ତି । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ମତରେ ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ସ୍କୁଲସକାଶେ ଏକପ୍ରକାର ପାଠ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥିର ନକରି ନିର୍ବାଚନ ଭାର ଯେବେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମିତିଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଦିଆଯାଏ ଏବଂ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବଢ଼ାଇ ଦିଆଯାଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ବିସ୍ତାର ହେବ ଏବଂ ସାଧାରଣ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ମିଳିବ । ଯେଉଁ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦା ପ୍ରଥା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନୁହେଁ, ସେ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦା ପ୍ରଥା ରକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିବା ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗର ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷୀୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନେ ଅବରୋଧ ପ୍ରଥା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯାହା ବୁଝନ୍ତି, ସାଧାରଣ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନେ ତଦପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ ବୁଝନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ସ୍କୁଲମାନଙ୍କରେ ଅବରୋଧ ପ୍ରଥା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନାହିଁ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଅବରୋଧ ପ୍ରଥା ବୁଝନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ଯେ, ୯/୧୦ ବର୍ଷଯାଏ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ଅବରୋଧରେ ରହନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ କେବଳ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ । ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲେଖିବା, ପଢ଼ିବା ଓ ଗଣିତ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବା ସକାଶେ ମଫସଲରେ ବହୁତ ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ସ୍କୁଲମାନ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । ପ୍ରତି ଗ୍ରାମରେ ଯେବେ ବାଳିକା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବା ସମ୍ଭବ ହୁଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଉତ୍ତମ । ଯେବେ ତାହା ନହୁଏ ତାହାହେଲେ ବାଳକମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଏକ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ପଢ଼ିବା ପ୍ରତି ପିତାମାତାମାନଙ୍କର ଆପତ୍ତି ନଥିଲେ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ଦେବା ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । ଯେଉଁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଅଛି ଓ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ଅଭାବ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ବୁଝନ୍ତି, ସେହିପରି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ନିର୍ବାଚନର ଭାର ଦେବା ଉଚିତ । ତାହା ନକରି ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାବିହୀନ କତିପୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ପାଠ୍ୟନିର୍ବାଚନର ଭାର ଦେଲେ ତଦ୍ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରୟୋଜନାନୁରୂପ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯିବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହେବ ।

ଗତ ଫେବ୍ରୁଆରୀ ମାସରେ କେତେକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କଥାଭାଷା ହେଉଥିବା ସମୟରେ ଜଣେ ମେମ୍ବର କହିଲେ, ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ଲୋକେ ଯେବେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ନୁହନ୍ତି, ତାହା ହେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପୃଥକ୍ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ସେମାନେ ତାହା ଆଶା କରିନପାରନ୍ତି । ଯେ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି, ତାହା ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ବିଚାର କରିବା ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଦିଆଯାଇନପାରେ । ମାତ୍ର ସୁଖର କଥା, ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାର ବିଚାର କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ କି ପ୍ରକାର ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯିବ, ତାହା ସ୍ଥିର କରିବା ସକାଶେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମିତିମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଭାର ରହିବାର ପକ୍ଷପାତୀ ହୋଇଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଦୁଃଖର କଥା, ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ସ୍କୁଲ ସକାଶେ ସମାଜ ଓ ସ୍ଥାନର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ପାଠ୍ୟ ବିଷୟମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ବିଶେଷଭାବରେ କହିବାକୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସମୟ ନାହିଁ, ଏପରି କରିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କ ମନୋଗତ ଭାବ ଜାଣିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଏବଂ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷାର ପକ୍ଷପାତୀ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମତ ବୁଝିବା ମଧ୍ୟ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ସ୍କୁଲର ପାଠ୍ୟ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କିଛି କହିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ହେବ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ କେବଳ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କେତେକ କଥା କହି ବକ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଶେଷ କରିବୁ ।

ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା

ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ମଧ୍ୟଶ୍ରେଣୀ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଅତି ଅଳ୍ପ । ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଆହୁରି କମ୍ । ଯେଉଁ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ଏସବୁ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଅତି ଅଳ୍ପସଂଖ୍ୟକ ହିନ୍ଦୁବାଳିକା ମଧ୍ୟ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କରେ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି । ବାଲ୍ୟବିବାହ କେତେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ଏହାର କାରଣ ଅଟେ । ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ବିବେଚନାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କର ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକମାନ ଯେବେ ଲୋକ ସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ମତାମତ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେଉଥାନ୍ତା । ତାହାହେଲେ ଅନେକ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବାଳିକା ଏହି ସବୁ ସ୍କୁଲମାନଙ୍କରେ ପଢୁଥାନ୍ତେ । ଉଦାହରଣସ୍ୱରୂପ ମହାକାଳୀ ପାଠଶାଳା ଏବଂ ବନାରସରେ ଥିବା ସେଣ୍ଟ୍ରାଲ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବାଳିକା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ନିଆଯାଉ । ଏହି ଦୁଇ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ସହସ୍ର ସହସ୍ର ବାଳିକା ପଢୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଜାତିଭେଦ ପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି । ସେହି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କର ଉଦ୍‌ଯୋଗୀମାନେ ହିନ୍ଦୁସାଧାରଣଙ୍କର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅବରୋଧ ପ୍ରଥା ମାନି ଚଳନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ନିମ୍ନ ପ୍ରାଇମେରୀ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କରେ ଯେପରି ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ, ମଧ୍ୟଶ୍ରେଣୀ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ସେହିପରି ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଏବଂ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନ ସ୍ଥାନୋପଯୋଗୀ ହେବା ମଧ୍ୟ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ।

ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଜାତି ପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ଏପରି ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ପୃଥକ୍ ପୃଥକ୍ ସ୍କୁଲହୋଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସମାଜ ଉପଯୋଗୀ ପାଠ୍ୟ ବିଷୟ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେବା ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ । ଯଥା : ହିନ୍ଦୁବାଳିକାମାନେ ପ୍ରାୟ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେବାକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ହିନ୍ଦୁମାନେ ଚାହାନ୍ତି ଯେ ଭଲ ଘରକରଣା କରିବା ସକାଶେ ଯେତିକି ଶିକ୍ଷା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ତେତିକି ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଲେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ । ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଆସିଥିବା ପତ୍ରର ନିମ୍ନୋଦ୍ଧୃତ ଅଂଶରୁ ଜଣାଯାଏ ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଏ ବିଷୟ ଭଲ ରୂପେ ବୁଝି ପାରିଅଛନ୍ତି ।

‘‘ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯିବା ଉଚିତ, ଯଦ୍ୱାରା ସେମାନେ ଶୁଶିକ୍ଷିତା ମାତା ହୋଇ ପାରିବେ, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷାର ନିୟମ ବୁଝି ଶିଶୁମାନଙ୍କର ଯତ୍ନ କରିପାରିବେ, ସନ୍ତାନମାନଙ୍କୁ କିପରି ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଦିଆଯିବ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କିପରି ସୁଶାସନରେ ରଖିବାକୁ ହେବ, ତାହା ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ ଓ ବାଳକ ବାଳିକା ମାନଙ୍କର ପୀଡ଼ା ସମୟରେ କିପରି ଶୁଶ୍ରୂଷା କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ଓ ଗାର୍ହସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଜୀବନର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ବିଷୟମାନ କିପରି ଚଳାଇବାକୁ ହେବ, ତାହା ଜାଣିପାରିବେ ।’’

ଯେବେ ଅର୍ଥର ଅଭାବ ନହୁଏ ତାହାହେଲେ ପ୍ରତି ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଓ ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ମଧ୍ୟଶ୍ରେଣୀ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନ ବହୁସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ଖୋଲିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଏହି ସବୁ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଇଂରେଜୀକୁ Second languag ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ଗୌଣଭାଷାସ୍ୱରୂପ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯିବା ଉଚିତ । ଯେଉଁସ୍ଥାନରେ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଓ ଧର୍ମଶିକ୍ଷା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ, ସେ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଏ ସବୁ ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବା ସକାଶେ ବିହିତ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ ହେବା ଉଚିତ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ପ୍ରାୟ କୌଣସି ହିନ୍ଦୁବାଳିକା ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ତିନିଗୋଟି ଉଚ୍ଚବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଅଛି । ବିହାରରେ ଦୁଇଗୋଟି, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ । ଶିକ୍ଷିତ ହିନ୍ଦୁସମାଜ ଗୋଟିଏ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନମୟ ଯୁଗ ମଧ୍ୟଦେଇ ଗତି କରୁଅଛି । ବାଲ୍ୟବିବାହ ପ୍ରତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଆଉ ଆସ୍ଥାନାହିଁ । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ଯେବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାଜନ୍ମେ ତାହାହେଲେ ସେମାନେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ସହାୟତା କରିବେ ଏବଂ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେହିସବୁ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ ପଠାଇବେ । ଯେବେ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ହୁଏ, ଯେଉଁ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦା ସ୍କୁଲ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାପିତ କରାଯାଉ ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସାମାଜିକ ଅବସ୍ଥାନୁରୂପ ବିଷୟମାନ ସେଠାରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯାଉ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦାସ୍କୁଲ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନାହିଁ । ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟାନ ଓ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମପିତା ମାତାମାନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ କନ୍ୟାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ କରାଇବାର ସୁବିଧା ବୁଝିପାରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏସବୁ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସବୁ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛୁକ ନୁହନ୍ତି । କେତେକ ବାଳିକା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ

ହେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି, ଆଉ କେତେକ ନିଜ ନିଜ ଗୃହକର୍ମରେ ପାରଗ ହେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି, କେହି କେହି ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ନିଜ ସମାଜର ଉପକାର କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି । ଏଣୁ କେତେକ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଓ କେତେକ ସ୍ଥାନର ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବାକୁ ଗଲେ ବିଶେଷ ସାବଧାନତା ସହିତ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେବା ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଅଛି । ତାହାର ଉପର ଛ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ଯେଉଁ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ପ୍ରାୟ ଜାତିଭେଦ ପ୍ରଥା ମାନନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଯେବେ ଅବରୋଧ ପ୍ରଥା ରକ୍ଷା କରିବା ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗର ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଜାତିଭେଦ ମାନନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ପୃଥକ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ କରନ୍ତୁ ଏବଂ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦାସ୍କୁଲ ପ୍ରତି ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କର ଅନୁରାଗ ଜନ୍ମାଇବାକୁ ହେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରୟୋଜନ ଅନୁସାରେ ପାଠ୍ୟବିଷୟ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରନ୍ତୁ ।

କଲେଜ ଶିକ୍ଷା-ଆମ୍ଭ ଏ ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ କୌଣସି କଲେଜ ନାହିଁ । କିମ୍ବା ସେପରି କଲେଜ ସକାଶେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରିବାର ସମୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆସିନାହିଁ । ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରୁଁ ଯେ ୩/୪ ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କଟକଠାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ମହିଳା କଲେଜ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହେବ । ଯେବେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଅତି ଅଳ୍ପ ହୁଏ ଏବଂ ସେମାନେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ବାଳକ କଲେଜରେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଆପତ୍ତି ନକରନ୍ତି, ତାହେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ କଲେଜରେ ପଢ଼ିବା ଉଚିତ । ଯେବେ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ସଙ୍ଗରେ କଲେଜ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ଖୋଲାଯାଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ସେଥି ସକାଶେ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ନରଖି ଯେଉଁ ସବୁ ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯିବ, କେବଳ ତହିଁ ଲାଗି ଗୋଟିଏ ବା ଦିଓଟି 'ଲେକ୍‌ଚରର' ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରି ଦେଲେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ଏପରି ଲେକ୍‌ଚରର ଦ୍ୱାରା ବିଶେଷ କିଛି ଉପକାର ହେବାର ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ । ଯେବେ ସମୟରେ ଭାରତରେ ମହିଳା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୁଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ତଦ୍ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କର ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେବ । ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗଙ୍କର ଏହା ମନେରଖିବା ଉଚିତ ଯେ, ପ୍ରାଚ୍ୟ ଓ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ନାରୀ ଜୀବନ ଏକ ନୁହେଁ । ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଦେଶରେ ଯାହା ପ୍ରକୃତ ଶିକ୍ଷାବୋଲି ଗୃହୀତ ହେବ, ପ୍ରାଚ୍ୟ ଖଣ୍ଡରେ ସେପରି ଶିକ୍ଷାକୁ ଲୋକେ ଆଦର କରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ବୋମ୍ବାଇଠାରେ କେତେକ ସମୟ ରହି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବୁଝି ପାରିଅଛୁଁ ଯେ, ସେ ପ୍ରଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ସୁଶିକ୍ଷିତା । ତଥାପି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପିତାମାତା ସେପରି ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ନୁହନ୍ତି । ଶିକ୍ଷିତା ମହିଳାମାନେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ସମାଜରେ ବିଚରଣ କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ପର୍ଦ୍ଦା କ୍ଲବ ଅଛି, ତହିଁର ସଭ୍ୟ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ୭୦୦ । ସପ୍ତାହ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଦିନେ ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ଦର୍ଶକସ୍ୱରୂପ କ୍ଲବ ମଧ୍ୟକୁ ଯାଇ ପାରନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ପାରନ୍ତି । ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡରେ ଯେପରି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଖାଯାଏ, ଏଠାରେ ସେହିପରି ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ପିତାମାତାମାନେ ଏପରି ଶିକ୍ଷାର ପକ୍ଷପାତୀ ନୁହନ୍ତି ।

ଦିଓଟି ବିଷୟ ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଦେଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପରିଚାଳିତ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । (୧) ନିଜ ନିଜ ମାତୃଭାଷାରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପ୍ରଦତ୍ତ ହେବା; (୨) ସମାଜ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟଠାରୁ ପୃଥକ୍, ଏହା ଅବଧାରଣ କରି ଶିକ୍ଷାର ଗତି ସ୍ଥିର କରିବା । ନିରପେକ୍ଷ ଭାବରେ ଯେ ଏ ବିଷୟ ବିବେଚନା କରିବେ, ସେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଦୁଇ ବିଷୟର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଅନୁଭବ କରିପାରିବେ । ଯେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ମାତୃଭାଷା ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ନିମ୍ନ, ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯାଏ, ତେତେ ଜାତି ପକ୍ଷରେ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ।

ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ବିଷୟଟି ଅଧିକ ଗୁରୁତର । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏହା କହୁନାହୁଁ ଯେ, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା କରି ସମ୍ମାନ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଚାକିରି ପାଇବାକୁ ଆଶା କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପଥ ଏକାବେଳକେ ଅବରୋଧ କରି ଦେବାକୁ ହେବ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ମାନସିକ ଓ ଶାରୀରିକ ଶକ୍ତି ବଳରେ ସେପରି କରିବାକୁ ସମର୍ଥ ହେବେ, ସେମାନେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ସମାଜର ଗୌରବସ୍ଥଳ ହେବେ । ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଏହା ମନେ ରଖିବା ଉଚିତ ଯେ, ସାମାଜିକ ଓ ଜାତୀୟ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ବିବେଚନାରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ଥାନ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ଥାନଠାରୁ ପୃଥକ୍ ରହିବ । ଯେବେ ମାତୃଭାଷା ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦିଆଯାଇ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୁଏ ଏବଂ ନାରୀଜାତିର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତାନୁରୂପ ପାଠ୍ୟସ୍ଥିର କରି ଦିଆଯାଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଶିକ୍ଷାର୍ଥୀର ଅଭାବ ହେବ, ଏହା ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ମନେ କରୁନାହୁଁ । ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଯେପରି ସମ୍ମାନ ଓ ଉପାଧିମାନ ଅଛି, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଯେବେ ସେହିପରି କିଛି ରହେ, ତାହାହେଲେ ବାଳିକାମାନେ ଆଗ୍ରହ ସହିତ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଆସିବେ । ଅନେକ ବାଳିକା ଉପାଧି ଲାଳସାରେ ବିଶ୍ୱ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେବାକୁ ଆସୁଅଛନ୍ତି, କେବଳ ଶିକ୍ଷାର ଲୋଭରେ ନୁହେଁ । ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ପାଠ୍ୟସ୍ଥିର କରିବାରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଜାପାନ ମହିଳା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଚଳିବା ଉଚିତ । ଜାପାନ ସହିତ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଅବସ୍ଥାଗତ ଯେପରି ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଅଛି, ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡ ସହିତ ସେଠାରେ ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ ନାହିଁ । ଜାପାନର ମହିଳା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏପରି ସର୍ବଜନପ୍ରିୟ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା ଯେ ୩୦/୩୫ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସ୍କା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍କୁଲ କଲେଜରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରି ଉପାଧି ନେବାକୁ ଆକାଂକ୍ଷିତ ହେଲେ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେବେ ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ଜାପାନର ପଦାଙ୍କ ଅନୁସରଣ କରୁଁ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଦେଶର ବିଶେଷ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ସାଧନ କରିବ । ଜାପାନ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ନିମ୍ନ ଓ ମଧ୍ୟସ୍କୁଲ ମାନଙ୍କର ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ସ୍ଥିର କରିବା କଷ୍ଟକର ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ହେବାଯାଏ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ପୁସ୍ତକ ମାନଙ୍କରୁ ବାଛି ପାଠ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥିର କରାଯାଇପାରିବ । ସଂକ୍ଷେପରେ କହିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ଯେବେ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହୁଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଉପାୟର ଅଭାବ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।

ଉପରଲିଖିତମତେ ପାଠ୍ୟସ୍ଥିର କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇଁ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ପଦ୍ଧତିକୁ ହଠାତ୍ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରିବା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । ନୂତନ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲମାନଙ୍କରେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ

ଯେଉଁ ପାଠ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେବ, ତାହା ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ପାଠ୍ୟବିଷୟ ସହିତ ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ ରଖି ସ୍ଥିର କରାଯିବ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲର ଶିକ୍ଷା ଶେଷ କରି ସଂସାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛୁକ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ପାଠ୍ୟ ବିଷୟମାନ ଅସମ୍ପର୍କ କିମ୍ବା ଅଙ୍ଗହୀନ ହୋଇ ରହିବା ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । ପାଠ୍ୟ ବିଷୟମାନ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଯଥାସମ୍ଭବ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରହିବା ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ । ଆଉ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଆଡ଼କୁ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷେ ଉକ୍ତ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସୋପାନ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । ଆହୁରି ମଧ୍ୟ ପାଠ୍ୟ ବିଷୟମାନ ଏପରି ଭାବରେ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହୋଇପାରେ ଯେ, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ମାଟ୍ରିକ୍ୟୁଲେଶନ ପରୀକ୍ଷାଦେବା ସକାଶେ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରିବେ, ସେମାନେ ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କଲେ ସହଜରେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ମାଟ୍ରିକ୍ୟୁଲେଶନ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେଇପାରିବେ ।

ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ଓ ଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ

"ଏକାନ୍ନବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ପରିବାରମାନଙ୍କରେ ବିଧବା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଯେପରି ଯତ୍ନରେ ପ୍ରତିପାଳିତ ହେଉଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସୀମା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ହେଲେ ହେଁ ସେମାନେ ପରିବାରସ୍ଥ ଅନ୍ୟ ପାଞ୍ଚଜଣଙ୍କର ଯେପରି ଉପକାର କରିବାର ସୁବିଧା ପାଉଥିଲେ, ଆଜିକାଲି ପୂର୍ବପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଏକାନ୍ନବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ପରିବାର ପ୍ରଥା ଖଣ୍ଡବିଖଣ୍ଡ ହେଉଥିବା ଯୋଗୁଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସେ ସୁବିଧା ଚାଲି ଯାଉଅଛି । ପୂର୍ବତନ ପ୍ରଥାନୁସାରେ ସେମାନେ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଅନ୍ୟର ଅଧୀନରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ସେମାନଙ୍କର କେତେକ ସୁବିଧା ଥିଲା । ଆଜିକାଲି ତାହା ସବୁ ଚାଲି ଯାଉଅଛି; ତହିଁ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଯେଉଁ ସୁବିଧା ସବୁଥିଲା, ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଚାଲିଯାଉଅଛି ।" ସାର ଏଡ଼ୱାର୍ଡ଼ ମାକ୍‌ଲାଗନ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଯେଉଁ ପତ୍ର ଦେଇଥିଲେ ତହିଁରୁ ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଅଂଶଟି ଉଦ୍ଧୃତ ହେଲା । ବାଳ ବିଧବାମାନେ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢ଼ି ଏବଂ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କରେ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲମାନ ହେବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ୧୯୦୯ ସାଲରେ ବେଙ୍ଗଲ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ପରୀକ୍ଷାସ୍ୱରୂପ କଲିକତାଠାରେ ହନ୍ଦୁବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲ ବସାଇବାକୁ ଯାଇଁ ହିନ୍ଦୁସମାଜରୁ ବିଶେଷ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ପାଇଥିେ ଏବଂ ଅତି କଷ୍ଟରେ ତିନିଗୋଟି ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବିଧବା ମିଳିଲେ; ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ମାସିକ ୬୦୦ ଠାରୁ ୭୦୦ଟଙ୍କା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଖରଚ ହେଉଥିଲା । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସେ ଚେଷ୍ଟା ସଫଳ ହୋଇଅଛି । ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖର ବିଷୟ ଯେ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲ ନାହିଁ । ୧୯୧୦ ସାଲରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲ ଦେବେ ବୋଲି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବଡ଼ ଆଶା କରିଥିଲୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ନୂତନ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ହେବାଦିନଠାରୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆଶା ଅପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ରହିଅଛି । ୧୯୧୪ ମସିହାରେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କେତେକ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଆଗତ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଦୁଃଖର ବିଷୟ, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ଆସିଲା ନାହିଁ ।

ଯେଉଁମାନେ ରେଭେନ୍‌ସା ବାଳିକା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଇତିହାସ ଜାଣନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ଏହା ଅବଗତ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେ, ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ହାକିମମାନେ ଯେବେ ତାହାର ପ୍ରତିକୂଳରେ ଚାଲି କୃତକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତେ, ତାହାହେଲେ କଟକ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ଉଚ୍ଚବାଳିକା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପାଇ ପାରିନଥାନ୍ତା । ଯେବେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷଙ୍କ ମତକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ ନକରି ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ସ୍କୁଲର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥାନ୍ତେ ତାହାହେଲେ ଏତେବେଳକୁ ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସକାଶେ କଟକରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଟ୍ରେନିଂସ୍କୁଲ ହୋଇପାରିଥାନ୍ତା । ମାତ୍ର ସୁଖର ବିଷୟ ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଏ ବିଷୟ ପ୍ରତି ପଡ଼ିଅଛି ଏବଂ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଆଶା କରୁ, ଏଠାରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଗୋଟିଏ ଟ୍ରେନିଂସ୍କୁଲ ପାଇବୁ ।

ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଏଠାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ନାନା ଜାତିର ଅନେକ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ପାଇବାର ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ନୁହନ୍ତି, ଅଥଚ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବିକାନିର୍ବାହ ସକାଶେ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ଉପାୟ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଶିଳ୍ପବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ବିଶେଷ ଆଦରର ପଦାର୍ଥ ହେବ ।

ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କିଛି କହିବା ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ବୋଧକରୁଁ । କାରଣ ସ୍କୁଲପରିଚାଳନାର ଯେତେ ସୁବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରାଯାଉ ପଛକେ, ଶିକ୍ଷକ, ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ଏବଂ ସ୍କୁଲର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଉପରେ ଜାତିପ୍ରଥା ମାନୁଥିବା ବାଳିକାମାନେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଆସିବା ନ ଆସିବା ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ ।

ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପବିତ୍ର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କର ସନ୍ତାନମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେମାନେ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେଉଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ଓ ମନର ଭାବ ଜାଣିବା ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନଙ୍କର ଉଚିତ । ପିତାମାତାମାନଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ଲାଭ କରିବା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ବାସ୍ତବରେ ପିତାମାତାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭଲରୂପେ ଜାଣିବା ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନଙ୍କର ଉଚିତ । ତାହାହେଲେ ହିନ୍ଦୁମାନେ କୌଣସି ଦ୍ୱିଧା ନ କରି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇବାକୁ ପଠାଇବେ । ଦୁଃଖର କଥା, କେତେକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଅଭିଭାବକମାନଙ୍କ ମତ ଜାଣିବା ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ କିମ୍ବା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନୁହେଁ । ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଯେବେ ସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଏପରି ଭାବ ପୋଷଣ କରନ୍ତି ତାହା ହେଲେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିସ୍ତାର ବଡ଼ ଆଶାଜନକ ନୁହେଁ । ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀମାନେ ମାତାଙ୍କର ପବିତ୍ରସ୍ଥାନ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ସଦ୍ଭାବ ରହିଲେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ସେମାନେ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ଲାଭ କରି ପାରିବେ ।

ଆମ୍ଭେ କହିଅଛୁଁ ଯେ, ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ଉପରେ ବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କ ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଶେଷରୂପେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ । ପୁସ୍ତକ ନିର୍ବାଚନରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ବିଶେଷ ସତର୍କ ହେବା ଉଚିତ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ

ଲୋକଙ୍କ ମତାମତ ଓ ମନୋଗତ ଭାବ ଜାଣିପାରିବା ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବପର ନଥିବାରୁ ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ କ୍ରମେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ସମିତିମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ପୁସ୍ତକ ନିର୍ବାଚନଭାର ରହିବା ଉଚିତ । ଅନେକ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ, ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଯେଉଁସବୁ ପୁସ୍ତକ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୁଏ ତାହା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଭଲ ପୁସ୍ତକ ତାହା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଭଲ ପୁସ୍ତକ ସେଠାରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହୋଇ ପାରନ୍ତା । ଏପରି ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାବିଭାଗ କିପରି ପୁସ୍ତକ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କରିପାରନ୍ତି, ତାହା ଜଣାଯାଉନାହିଁ । ସେ ଯାହାହେଉ, ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଯେପରି ପତ୍ର ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି ତହିଁରୁ ଜଣାଯାଏ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାର ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଅଛି ଏବଂ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଭାରତ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ୍ରମେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରାଯିବ, ତେତେବେଳେ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହୋଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଓ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିବେ ।



ବିଲାତପ୍ରବାସ

ବିଲାତଯାତ୍ରାର କଳ୍ପନା

୧୮୯୭ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ମୋର ପିତା ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ ସି.ଆଇ.ଇ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବିଲାତ ଯାତ୍ରା କରିଥିଲେ ତହିଁର କିଛିଦିନ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମୁଁ ଏଫ୍.ଏ. ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେଇଥିଲି । କିନ୍ତୁ ପରୀକ୍ଷାର ଫଳ ବାହାରି ନଥିବାରୁ ଓ କି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ବିଲାତ ଯିବି ତାହା ସ୍ଥିର କରି ନଥିବାରୁ ମୁଁ ପିତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଯାଇ ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ । ସେହି ସମୟରୁ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ସର୍ବଦା ମୋ ମନରେ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ଥିଲା । ସମୟ ସମୟ ଅନେକ ଭାରତୀୟ ରମଣୀ ବିଲାତ ଯିବା କଥା ଯେତେବେଳେ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କ ମୁଖରୁ ଶୁଣୁଥିଲି ବା ସମ୍ବାଦପତ୍ରରେ ପଢୁଥିଲି, ସେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ବଳବତୀ ହେଉଥିଲା । ମନେ ମନେ ବିଚାରୁଥିଲି, ଯେବେ ଭଗବାନ୍ ସୁଦିନ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶ ପୃଥିବୀରେ ଏତେଦୂର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାଲାଭ କରିଅଛି, ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶବାସୀ ମାନଙ୍କର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପ ଦ୍ୱାରା ସମସ୍ତ ପୃଥିବୀ ମନ୍ତ୍ରମୁଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇଅଛି, ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶର ରୀତି ନୀତି ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଅନୁକରଣ କରିବାପାଇଁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସର୍ବଦା ତତ୍ପର ଓ ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମାତୃଭୂମିକୁ ଶାସନ କରୁଅଛି, ସେହି ଐଶ୍ୱର୍ଯ୍ୟଶାଳୀ ଦେଶ ଥରେ ସ୍ୱଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଦେଖି ମୋର ବାସନା ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରିବି ।

୧୯୦୬ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦର ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମକାଳରେ ମୁଁ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟୋପଲକ୍ଷରେ ପୁରୀ ଯାଇଥିଲି ସେଠାରେ ଜଣେ ବନ୍ଧୁଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଶୁଣିଲି ଯେ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଆପଣା ବ୍ୟୟରେ ଦିଓଟି ଭାରତୀୟ ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ବିଲାତରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ପଠାଇବେ ବୋଲି ସ୍ଥିର କରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ସେଥିରୁ ଜଣଙ୍କ ନାମ ସରଳାବାଳା, ସେ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ବିଧବା । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ପୂର୍ବେ କଲିକତାର ବେଥୁନ୍ କଲେଜରେ ପଢୁଥିଲି । ସଭ୍ୟଦେଶର ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଜାଣିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ମୋର ଇତିମଧ୍ୟରେ ଭାରି ଆଗ୍ରହ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ମୋର ବାଲ୍ୟ-ସହଚରୀ ସରଳା ସେହି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ବିଲାତ ଯାଉଥିବାର ଶୁଣି ମୋ ମନ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ନାଚି ଉଠିଲା ଓ ମୁଁ ବିଲାତ ଯିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ମନରେ ସ୍ଥିର କଲି । ତତ୍ପରେ କାଳବିଳମ୍ବ ନକରି ମୁଁ କଟକକୁ ଆସି ପିତାଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ମୋର ବିଲାତ ଯିବା କଥା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ କଲି । ସିଏ ମୋର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବକୁ ଅତି ଆଦର ସହକାରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲେ ଓ ବିଲାତରେ ମୋର ଶିକ୍ଷାର ସମସ୍ତ ବ୍ୟୟଭାର ବହନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଅକୁଣ୍ଠିତ ଚିତ୍ତରେ ଅଙ୍ଗୀକାର କଲେ । ପଛକୁ ସ୍ଥିର ହେଲା, ଯେଉଁ ଦିଓଟି ମହିଳା ବିଲାତକୁ ଯାଉଅଛନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଯିବି ଓ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଯେଉଁ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପଢ଼ାଇବେ ମୁଁ ସେହି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପଢ଼ିବି, ପିତା ସମସ୍ତ ବ୍ୟୟ ବହନ କରିବେ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବିଚାରିଲୁ ଯେ

ସରକାର ବାହାଦୁର ଯେତେବେଳେ ଏ ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କୁ ବହୁବ୍ୟୟରେ ବିଲାତ ପଠାଉଅଛନ୍ତି, ଅବଶ୍ୟ ସରକାର ବାହାଦୂର ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍କୃଷ୍ଟ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପଢ଼ାଇବେ ଓ ଦୂର ବିଦେଶରେ ସେମାନେ ଯେପରି ସୁଖସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦରେ ରହି ବିଦେଶବାସର କଷ୍ଟ ଭୁଲିଯିବେ, ଏଥିର ବିଶେଷ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିବେ । ଏମାନଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ପୀଡ଼ା ବା କଷ୍ଟ ହେଲେ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟ ବୁଝିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ସରକାର ଅବଶ୍ୟ ସୁବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିବେ । ମୋ ପିତା କହିଲେ, ''ଦିଓଟି ରମଣୀଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ନିଃସହାୟ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଅପରିଚିତ ଦୂର ବିଦେଶକୁ ଯିବା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ନପାରେଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସରକାର ବାହାଦୂର ବିଲାତରେ ତୁମ୍ଭର ଅଭିଭାବକ ହେବାପାଇଁ ଯେବେ ମଙ୍ଗିବେ, ତେବେ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ବିଲାତ ପଠାଇବାରେ ମୋର କିଛି ଆପତ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ସମସ୍ତ ତଥ୍ୟ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ସରଳାଙ୍କଠାକୁ ପତ୍ର ଦେଲି । ସେ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲେ ଯେ ସେ ଓ ବମ୍ୱେଇ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ଜଣେ ମୁସଲମାନ ରମଣୀ ସରକାରଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବୃତ୍ତି ପାଇ ବିଲାତଯିବା କଥା ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଅଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ୧୯୦୬ ସାଲ ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ମାସରେ ଯିବାକୁ ହେବ ଅଥବା ୧୯୦୭ ସାଲ ଜାନୁଆରୀ ମାସରେ ଯିବାକୁ ହେବ, ତାହା ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇନାହିଁ ।

ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ କଥା ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଅବିଳମ୍ୱେ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗର ଡାଇରେକ୍ଟର ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ଅଲି ସାହେବଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ କଲିକତାଠାରେ ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ କରି ତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବୁଝିଲି ଯେ ଏକଥା ମୌଖିକ ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଅଛି ସତ୍ୟ, କିନ୍ତୁ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କୌଣସି ଲିଖିତ ଆଦେଶ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଏ ବିଷୟ ମଞ୍ଜୁର କଲାପରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ମଞ୍ଜୁରି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । (ବଡ଼ଲାଟ୍ ସେତେବେଳେ ଶିମଳାରେ ଥାନ୍ତି ।) ଏ ମଞ୍ଜୁରି ହେଉଁ ହେଉଁ ଦିନକେତେ ଲାଗିବ । ତତ୍‌ପରେ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାର ଦିନ ସ୍ଥିର ହେବ । ସୁତରାଂ ୧୯୦୭ ଜାନୁଆରୀ ମାସରେ ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଦୁଇଜଣ ରମଣୀ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଅଛି ଏଥିମଧ୍ୟରେ ଯିବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ନାହିଁ ।

ମୁଁ ମୋର ବିଲାତଯିବାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ପିତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଡିରେକ୍ଟର ସାହେବଙ୍କୁ କହିଲି । ସାହେବ ପଚାରିଲେ, ''ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭକରି ଫେରି ଆସି ତୁମ୍ଭେ କଣ କରିବ ?'' ମୁଁ ଉତ୍ତର କଲି, ''ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଶିକ୍ଷାକରି ଫେରିଆସି ଦେଶରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବା ମୋର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ।'' ସାହେବ ମହୋଦୟ ମୋ କଥା ଶୁଣି ଭାରି ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଲେ ଏବଂ ମତେ ଓ ମୋ ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନ୍ତରର ସହିତ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଲେ । ମୁଁ ଶେଷରେ ସାହେବଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରି କହିଲି, ''ମହାଶୟ, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମପ୍ରଧାନ ଦେଶର କନ୍ୟା । ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଦେଶ ଶୀତପ୍ରଧାନ ଦେଶ, ତହିଁରେ ପୁଣି ମୁଁ ଶୁଣିଛି ଯେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଶୀତକାଳ ଅତି ଭୀଷଣ । ବିଶେଷତଃ ମୋର ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଭଲ ନୁହେଁ । ଏ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଶରୀରରେ ଶୀତକାଳରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଦେଶକୁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଗଲେ ମୁଁ ତୁରନ୍ତ ଶୀତରେ ପ୍ରାଣ ହରାଇବି ବୋଲି ମୋର ଭୟ ହେଉଅଛି । ସରକାର ଯେଉଁ ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କୁ ପଠାଉଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଆଜ୍ଞା ଅନୁସାରେ ଶୀତକାଳରେ ଅବଶ୍ୟ

ବିଲାତ ଯିବେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେବେ ଆଗାମୀ ଜାନୁଆରୀ ମାସରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଯିବା କଥା ହୁଏ, ତାହାହେଲେ ମୋର ବିଲାତଯିବା କଥା ହେବନାହିଁ । ଆପଣ ଇଚ୍ଛାକଲେ ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟ ଓ ଭାରତୀୟ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କଠାରୁ ମଞ୍ଜୁର ଅଣି ପାରିବେ ଓ ମତେ ତାର ଖବର ଦ୍ୱାରା (Telegraph) ଜଣାଇପାରିବେ । ତାହା ହେଲେ ଶୀତକାଳ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବିଲାତ ଯାତ୍ରା କରି ପାରିବୁ ଓ ଶୀତକାଳ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ବିଲାତର ଜଳବାୟୁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ସହିଗଲେ ଶୀତଋତୁ ବେଳକୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ତେତେ କଷ୍ଟ ଓ ପୀଡ଼ା ଭୋଗକରିବାକୁ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।

ଡିରେକ୍ଟର ସାହେବ ମୋ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ସମ୍ମତ ହେଲେ । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନେକ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଇ କଟକ ଫେରିଲି ଓ ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ସମସ୍ତ ବିଷୟ ଜଣାଇଲି । ପିତା ମତେ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ଅଶଙ୍କିତ ଚିତ୍ତରେ ଅନୁମତି ଦେଲେ । କଟକ ଫେରି ଆସିବାର ଆଠଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଡିରେକ୍ଟର ମହୋଦୟ ଠାରୁ ଖବର ପାଇଲି ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ବିଲାତଯିବା କଥା ବଡ଼ଲାଟ ମଞ୍ଜୁର କରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ଯତ୍‌ପରୋନାସ୍ତି ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଲି ଓ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାର ସମସ୍ତ ଆନୁପୂର୍ବିକ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲି । କ୍ରମଶଃ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ବିଦାୟ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲି । ଜଣେ ବନ୍ଧୁ କହିଲେ, ''ବୃଦ୍ଧ ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ଏ ବୟସରେ ଏକାକୀ ରଖି ବିଲାତ ଯିବା ତୁମ୍ଭର ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ତ ଅଳ୍ପ ସମୟ ନୁହେଁ, (ଈଶ୍ୱର ନ କରନ୍ତୁ) ଏଥିମଧ୍ୟରେ ତୁମ୍ଭେ ବୃଦ୍ଧପିତାଙ୍କୁ ହରାଇ ପାର ।'' ମୁଁ ଭାବିଲି, ''ବୃଦ୍ଧପିତାଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ମୁଁ କାହିଁକି ଯାଉଅଛି ? ସେଠାରେ ନୂତନ କଥା ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିବି ? ଯେବେ ଶିକ୍ଷାସାରି ଫେରି ଆସି ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ନ ଦେଖିବି, ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରି କି ଫଳହେବ ?' ଏହିପରି କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଦୁଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତା ମୋ ମନକୁ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ କଲା । ପରକ୍ଷଣରେ ପିତାଙ୍କର ବହୁମୂଲ୍ୟ ଉପଦେଶଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମୋର ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା, ତେତେବେଳେ ସମସ୍ତ ଦୁଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତା ଦୂର ହୋଇଗଲା । ମୁଁ ଭାବିଲି ''ମୁଁ ବଙ୍ଗଦେଶରେ ଜନ୍ମଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଅଛି ସତ୍ୟ କିନ୍ତୁ ଉତ୍କଳମାତାଙ୍କ କ୍ରୋଡରେ ପ୍ରତିପାଳିତ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ମୁଁ ଉତ୍କଳଦେଶକୁ ଅଧିକତର ସ୍ନେହ କରେ । ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶଲାଗି ପିତା ମନ ପ୍ରାଣ ଦେଇ ଏ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବୟସରେ ରୁଗଣ୍ ଶରୀରରେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଅନବରତ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଶିକ୍ଷା ବିସ୍ତାର କରିବ ମୋ ପିତାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ, ମୋ ପିତାଙ୍କର ମୋ ପ୍ରତି ଯେଉଁ ଅକୃତ୍ରିମ ସ୍ନେହ ଅନ୍ତତଃ ତହିଁର ପ୍ରତିଦାନ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ସେ ଦେଶ ପ୍ରତି ମୋର କିଛି କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ବିଲାତରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରି ଫେରିଆସି ପିତାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ମହତ୍ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ସାଧନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଯଦି ମୁଁ କିଞ୍ଚିତ ପରିମାଣରେ ହେଲେ କୃତକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେବି, ତେବେ ମୋ ଜୀବନ ସାର୍ଥକ ହେବ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ସର୍ବଶକ୍ତିମାନ ଭଗବାନ୍‌ଙ୍କଠାରେ ଶରଣଗତ ହୋଇ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ କରିବାପାଇଁ ଆଶାବାନ୍ଧି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଅବତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୁଅନ୍ତି, ମଙ୍ଗଳମୟ ଭଗବାନ୍ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କଦାପି ବିମୁଖ ବା ନିରାଶ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏହି ଭାବ ଉଦିତ ହେବା ମାତ୍ରକେ ମୋ ଦେହରେ ନବଶକ୍ତିର ସଞ୍ଚାର ହେଲା,

ନିରାଶା କେଉଁଆଡ଼େ ଉଭେଇ ଗଲା; ମୁଁ ଭାବିଲି, ଈଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ କୃପାରୁ ମୁଁ ଫେରି ଆସି ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖିବି । ସେହି ମଙ୍ଗଳମୟ ବିଧାତାଙ୍କ ଅପାର କରୁଣା ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭରକରି ହୃଦୟକୁ ତାଙ୍କରିଠାରେ ସମର୍ପଣ କରି, ସହାସ୍ୟବଦନରେ ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବିଦାୟ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲି ଓ ୧୯୪୬ ସାଲ ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ମାସ ୨୭ ରିଖ ଦିନ ପିତା, ଭ୍ରାତା ଓ ଭଗିନୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଅପରାହ୍ଣ ୬ଘଣ୍ଟା ସମୟରେ କଲିକତା ଅଭିମୁଖେ ଯାତ୍ରାକଲି । ସେହି ସମୟରେ ମତେ ବିଦାୟ ଦେବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ଅନେକଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ବନ୍ଧୁ କଟକ ଷ୍ଟେସନଠାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ଆଶାର କଥା କହି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ବାଷ୍ପପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନେତ୍ରରେ ବିଦାୟ ନେଲି ।



ବମ୍ବେ

ଯେଉଁଦିନ କଟକ ଛାଡ଼ିଲି, ସେଦିନ ଅବିଶ୍ରାନ୍ତ ବାରିଧାରା ବର୍ଷୁଥିଲା । କଲିକତାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ମୋର ସହଯାତ୍ରିକା ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଘେନି ବମ୍ବେ ଯାତ୍ରା କଲି । ପିତା, ଭ୍ରାତା ଓ ଭଗିନୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଥିଲେ । କଟକଠାରୁ ବମ୍ବେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟଦେବଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଭାରତରେ ଥାଉଁ ଥାଉଁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବିଲାତର ନମୁନା ପାଇଲୁଁ । ଅଗଷ୍ଟମାସ ୩୦ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବମ୍ବେଠାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲୁ । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟତମ ସହଯାତ୍ରିକା କୁମାରୀ ଅଡ଼ିଆ ଫାଇଜି ଜାତିରେ ମୁସଲମାନ, ବାସସ୍ଥାନ ବମ୍ବେ । ସେଠାରେ କୁମାରୀଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ ହେଲା ।

ସେଦିନ କୁମାରୀ ଫାଇଜି ମତେ ଓ ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଚା ପାନ କରିବାପାଇଁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଦେଲେ । ଅପରାହ୍ଣରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ରକ୍ଷାକରିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଗଲୁଁ । କୁମାରୀ ଫାଇଜିଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ବାଦଶାହୀ ଅମଳର ବେଶଭୁଷା କଳ୍ପନାରେ ଅଙ୍କିତ ହୋଇଗଲା । କୁମାରୀଙ୍କର ପରିଧାନ ଆସମାନି ରଙ୍ଗର ପୋଷୋୟଜି ଶାଢ଼ୀ । ବେଶବିନ୍ୟାସର ପରିପାଟ୍ୟ ଓ ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବର ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ମୋହିତ ଓ ସ୍ତବ୍ଧ ହୋଇଗଲି । ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ବେଶଭୂଷା ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ଫାଇଜିଙ୍କୁ ଏକ ଧ୍ୟାନରେ ଅନାଇ ରହିଲି । କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରିବା ବିଷୟରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଫାଇଜି ବିଶେଷ ପଟୁ । ଚାପାନ କରି ସାରି କେତେକ୍ଷଣ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ହେବା ପରେ ମୁଁ ଓ ସରଳା ବସାକୁ ଫେରିଲୁ । ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ମାସ ୧ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ ବମ୍ବେ ଠାରୁ ବିଲାତ ଅଭିମୁଖେ ଜାହାଜ ଚଢ଼ିବାର ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେଦିନ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳରେ ମନ ଅତି ବିଷର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବ ଧାରଣ କଲା । ନିଜ ଦେଶକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି, ନିଜର ସ୍ନେହମୟ ଜ୍ଞାତି ସ୍ୱଜନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପାଇଁ ବିଦାୟ ନେଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅପରିଚିତ ଦେଶରେ ରହିବାକୁ ହେବ । ଯେଉଁ ପିତା ମତେ ମୋ ଜନ୍ମଭୂମିରୁ ଆଣି ଆପଣାର କନ୍ୟାପରି ଅତିସ୍ନେହ ଓ ଆଦରସହକାରେ ଲାଳନ ପାଳନ କରିଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେହି ପିତାଙ୍କୁ ବୃଦ୍ଧସମୟରେ ଏକାକୀ ଛାଡ଼ିଯିବି । ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ଭାବନା ମନକୁ ସେଦିନ ଘାଣ୍ଟି

ପକାଇଲା । ସେଦିନର ଭାବନା ଆଜି ସୁଦ୍ଧା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲେ ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ବହେ । ମୋର ଅଶ୍ରୁପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନୟନ ଦେଖି ପିତା କହିଲେ, ''ଶୈଳ ! ଯେବେ ଯିବାକୁ ମନ ବଳୁନାହିଁ, ଚାଲ ଏହିଠାରୁ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଯିବା ।'' ଅବଶେଷରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେ ଯେ ତାହା ଅନିଚ୍ଛାର ଅଶ୍ରୁ ନୁହେଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରିୟଜନ-ବିଚ୍ଛେଦ ଜନିତ ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ ଅଶ୍ରୁ ଓ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେ ଯେ ସ୍ନେହ ବନ୍ଧନ ଓ ଦେଶର ମାୟାକୁ ଏଡ଼ି ମୁଁ ଯିବା ପାଇଁ ଦୃଢ଼ ପ୍ରତିଜ୍ଞା କରିଅଛି, ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ ଈଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ ଅଭୟପାଦପଦ୍ମରେ ମତେ ସମର୍ପଣ କରି, ମତେ ଓ ମୋର ସହଚରୀଙ୍କୁ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ କରି ବିଦାୟ ଦେଲେ ; କହିଲେ,''ପ୍ରଭୋ ! ତୁମ୍ଭର ଇଚ୍ଛା ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣହେଉ, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ଜୀବ, ତୁମ୍ଭର ଇଚ୍ଛା ବୁଝିବା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସାଧ୍ୟାତୀତ ।'' ଯିବା ସମୟରେ ପିତା ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲେ, '' ସରକାର ଅବଶ୍ୟ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଯପୃରୋନାସ୍ତି ଯତ୍ନ କରିବେ । ନିୟମିତରୂପେ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର କୁଶଳ ସମ୍ବାଦ ମତେ ଜଣାଉଥିବ । ଶୈଳର କୌଣସି ପୀଡ଼ା ହେଲେ ତତ୍‌କ୍ଷଣାତ୍ ମୋ ନିକଟକୁ ସମ୍ବାଦ ପଠାଇବ ।''

ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବସାରୁ ଘୋଡ଼ାଗାଡ଼ିରେ ଦିନ ୧୨ଟା ସମୟରେ ବମ୍ବେଇର 'ବାଲେଡ଼' ନାମକ ବନ୍ଦରଠାରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ହେଲୁ । ଟମାସ୍ କୁକ୍ ନାମକ ଏକ କୋମ୍ପାନୀଙ୍କଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବିଲାତ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ଟିକଟ କିଣିଥିଲୁଁ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବନ୍ଦରଠାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଉକ୍ତ କୋମ୍ପାନୀ ତରଫରୁ କର୍ମଚାରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଚମଡ଼ାବାକ୍ସ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜାହାଜକୁ ପଠାଇଦେଇଥିଲେ । ସୁତରାଂ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଁଏ ବ୍ୟାଗଛଡ଼ା ଆଉ କିଛି ନଥିଲା । ସେହି ବ୍ୟାଗଟିମାନ ଧରି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବାହାରିଲୁଁ ।

ଭାରତ ପ୍ଳେଗ ରୋଗରେ ଆକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଅଛି । ବଲାତ ଯିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଡାକ୍ତରମାଇନା ହେବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ଦେଖିଲୁ ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନାଡ଼ି ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଜଣେ ଡାକ୍ତରାଣୀ ମେମ୍ ଗୋଟିଏ କାଷ୍ଠାସନରେ ପିତୁଳାଟିଏ ପରି ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ମହିଳା ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି କରି ନାଡ଼ି ଟିପି ଗୋଟିଏ ଲୁହାବାଡ଼ି ଦିଆ ପିଞ୍ଜରାରେ ପୁରାଉଅଛନ୍ତି ଓ ହାତରେ ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ପାସ୍ (ଟିକଟ) ଦେଉଅଛନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁ ସ୍ୱଜନ ଓ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେବାପାଇଁ ବନ୍ଦର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି, ସେହିଠାରୁ ସେମାନେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଶେଷ ବିଦାୟ ନିଅନ୍ତି । ସେହି ଟିକଟଖଣ୍ଡିମାନ ହାତରେ ଧରି, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସେହି ପିଞ୍ଜରାରେ ପଶିଲୁଁ ଓ ସଜଳନୟନରେ ଆତ୍ମୀୟ ସ୍ୱଜନମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନାଇ ରହିଲୁଁ । ସେହି ପିଞ୍ଜରା ମଧରେ ଦେଖିଲି ଯେ ପିଞ୍ଜରାରେ ଯେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ରମଣୀଥିଲେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଚକ୍ଷୁ ଲୋତକପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ସେ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତର ଭାବ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରିବାର ଶକ୍ତି ମୋର ନାହିଁ । ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଅନନ୍ତ ସାଗର ଏକ ଦିଗରେ ସ୍ୱଦେଶ ଓ ସ୍ୱଜନ, ଅପର ଦିଗରେ ଅପରିଚିତ ବିଦେଶ ଓ ବହୁଦିନବ୍ୟାପୀ ବିଦେଶବାସ, ଏଣେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ପଶୁଶାଳାର ପଶୁତୁଲ୍ୟ ପିଞ୍ଜରାବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଅଛୁଁ । ଏସବୁ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଓ ଭାବନା ସହସା ମନକୁ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ କରିପକାଇଲା । କେତେ

ଅତୀତର ସ୍ନେହପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସ୍ମୃତି ମନରେ ଅଙ୍କିତ ହୋଇଗଲା । ସୁଦୂର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତର ଅନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବନା ମନକୁ ଘାଣ୍ଟି ପକାଇଲା ।

ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଜାହାଜଗୁଡ଼ିକ କୂଳକୁ ଆସି ପାରେ ନାହିଁ, କୂଳଠାରୁ କେତେକ ଦୂରରେ ଗଭୀର ଜଳରେ ଥାଏ । ସେ ଜାହାଜରେ ଚଢ଼ିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ପ୍ରଥମେ କୂଳରୁ ଛୋଟ ଧୂଆଁକଳ ବୋଟରେ ଯିବାକୁ ହୁଏ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ କେତେକ୍ଷଣ ପିଞ୍ଜରାବଦ୍ଧ ପଶୁମାନଙ୍କ ଦଶା ଭୋଗ କରିବା ପରେ ଛୋଟ ଧୂଆଁକଳର ଆହ୍ୱାନସୂଚକ ବଂଶୀ ବାଜିଉଠିଲା । ମୁଁ ମୋର ବାଲ୍ୟସହଚରୀ ସରଳାଙ୍କ ହାତ ଧରି ସେହି ବୋଟରେ ଚଢ଼ିଲି ଓ ଯେତେବେଳ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କୂଳସ୍ଥିତ ଆତ୍ମୀୟମାନଙ୍କ ଛାୟା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଗୋଚର ହେଲା, ସେତେକ୍ଷଣ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସତୃଷ୍ଣନୟନରେ କୂଳ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଏକଧ୍ୟାନରେ ଚାହିଁ ରହିଲି । ସେ ଦିନର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଓ ଭାବନା ହୃଦୟରୁ କଦାପି ଲିଭିବ ନାହିଁ । ଭାବନାରୂପ ଘୂର୍ଣ୍ଣିବାୟୁ ମନକୁ କେଉଁଆଡ଼େ ଉଡ଼ାଇ ନେଇଗଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ମନକୁ ମୋର ଆୟତ୍ତ ରଖିପାରିଲାନାହିଁ । ଆଶା, ନିରାଶା, ହର୍ଷ, ବିଷାଦ, ଶଙ୍କା, ସ୍ନେହ, ହୃଦୟକୁ ଯୁଗପତ୍ ଅଧିକାର କଲା । ସେ ଦିନର କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଆଜି ମଧ୍ୟ ହୃଦୟର ଅନ୍ତରତମ ପ୍ରଦେଶ କାନ୍ଦିଉଠେ ।





ମଧୁସୂଦନଙ୍କ ବାସଭବନ

ବିଲାତପ୍ରବାସ (୨)

ଜଳପଥ

ଚାହୁଁ ଚାହୁଁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଡଙ୍ଗା ବଡ଼ ଜାହାଜ ନିକଟରେ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏହି ଜାହାଜଟିର ନାମ "ମାଲ୍‌ଡ୍ରେରିଆ" । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେଝା ବ୍ୟାଗ ଖଣ୍ଡିକ ହାତରେ ଧରି ବଡ଼ ଜାହାଜକୁ ଉଠିଲୁ । ଦେଖିଲୁ ପୁଲିଶ ପ୍ରହରୀମାନେ ଶ୍ରେଣୀବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ଠିଆହୋଇ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଦତ୍ତ ପାଶଖଣ୍ଡିମାନ ନେଉଅଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜାହାଜ ଭିତରକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଉଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜଟି ସୁବୃହତ ଓ ସୁସଜ୍ଜିତ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସୁଖ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦତା ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଏବଂ ଡାକହାକ ଶୁଣିବାପାଇଁ ଜାହାଜରେ ଅନେକଗୁଡ଼ିକଏ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀ ଥାନ୍ତି । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଏମାନଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟବହାର ଅତି ଭଦ୍ର । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଥିବା କୋଠରି ଦେଖାଇ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ଜଣେ ଭୃତ୍ୟକୁ କହିବା ମାତ୍ରକେ ସେ କୋଠରି ଦେଖାଇଦେଲା । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜିନିଷ ସବୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଆସିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଜାହାଜକୁ ଆସିଥିଲା । ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ କୋଠରି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ରଖାଯାଇଥିବାର ଦେଖିଲୁଁ ।

ଏ ସୁବୃହତ୍ ଜାହାଜଟି ଛ ମହଲା । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଦୋମହଲାରେ କୋଠରୀ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସର୍ବୋଚ୍ଚ ମହଲାରେ ଜାହାଜର ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଥାନ୍ତି । ସେ ମହଲାରେ ଯେତେଗୁଡ଼ଏ କୋଠରି ଅଛି ତହିଁରେ ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ରହନ୍ତି, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେଠାରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ଦିଆଯାଏ ନାହିଁ । ପଞ୍ଚମ ମହଲାରେ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ କୋଠରି ଖାଲିଥିଲା । ମୁଁ ଜାହାଜର ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷଙ୍କୁ କୁହାବୋଲା କରି ଏଥିମଧ୍ୟରୁ ତିନିଜଣଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତିନିଗୋଟି କୋଠରି ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କଲି । କେଉଁ କେଉଁ କୋଠରିର ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଁଏ ଖଟଥାଏ । କୌଣସି କୌଣସି କୋଠରିରେ ଯୋଡ଼ିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଖଟ ଥାଏ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଖଟ ଉପରେ ସୁକୋମଳ ପକ୍ଷ-ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଗଦି ଓ ତକିଆ ଏବଂ ତଦୁପରି ଦୁଗ୍ଧଫେନନିଭ ପରିଷ୍କୃତ ବିଛଣା ଚଦର ପଡ଼ିଥାଏ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ନିତ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟବହାରୋପଯୋଗୀ ଲୁଗାପଟା ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରତି କୋଠରୀରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଁଏ ଛୋଟ ଆଲମାରୀ ଥାଏ । ଆଲମାରୀ ଭିତରେ ଲୁଗାପଟା ରହେ ଓ ଉପର ପାଖଟି ଟେବୁଲ ପରି ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୋଇପାରେ । ମୁହଁ ହାତ ଧୋଇବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ପାଣିର କଳ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ସାନ କୁଣ୍ଡଥାଏ । ସେ କୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରେ ମୁହଁ ହାତ ଧୋଇଲେ ମଇଳା ପାଣିଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଆପେ ଆପେ ତଳକୁ ବାହାରି ଯାଏ । ପ୍ରତି ଘରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ବଡ଼ ଦର୍ପଣ ଓ ଦର୍ପଣ ନିକଟରେ ତେଲ ସାବୁନ ପାନିଆ ଶିଶି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ରଖିବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ସାନ ଆଲମାରୀ ଥାଏ ।

ବସିବାପାଇଁ ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ସାନ ବେଞ୍ଚ ଓ ଲୁଗାପଟା ଟାଙ୍ଗିବାପାଇଁ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ହୁକ ଥାଏ । ଜାହାଜରେ ଜଳ ପଥରେ ପନ୍ଦରଦିନ କଟାଇବାକୁ ହୁଏ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର ସୁବିଧାପାଇଁ କୋଠରିଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉପରଲିଖିତ ରୂପେ ସଜ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଫାଇକି ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଠରିରେ ରହିଲେ । ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ ଓ ମୋତେ ଯେଉଁ ଦିଓଟି କୋଠରି ମିଳିଥିଲା ତହିଁରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଠରୀରେ ଆମ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଶୋଇବା ବସିବାର ଘର କଲୁଁ । ଜାହାଜ ଲୋହିତ ସାଗରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ ଭାରି ଗରମବୋଧ ହେବ ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ଆଗରୁ ଶୁଣିଥିଲି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆମ କୋଠରୀରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୈଦ୍ୟୁତିକ ପଙ୍ଖାର ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିଥିଲି । ଯେଉଁ କୋଠରୀରେ ଲୁଗାପଟା ରଖିଲୁଁ, ସେ କୋଠରୀଟି ଗାଧୁଆ ଘରର ଅତି ନିକଟ ।

ମୁଁ କୋଠରୀକୁ ଯାଇ ପନ୍ଦରଦିନର ବ୍ୟବହାରୋପଯୋଗୀ ଲୁଗାପଟା ମୋ ସିନ୍ଧୁକରୁ ବାହା କରି ଜାହାଜରେ ଥିବା ଆଲମାରୀରେ ରଖିଲି । ତତ୍‌ପରେ ଆମେ ତିନିଜଣ ଜାହାଜ ପ୍ରଦକ୍ଷିଣ କରିବାକୁ ବାହାରିଲୁଁ । ଜାହାଜଟି ଖୁବ୍ ବଡ଼, ଦେଖିଲେ ଗୋଟିଏ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ସହର ବୋଲି ମନେ ହୁଏ ଓ ଇଂରେମାନଙ୍କ ବୁଦ୍ଧିକୁ ଶତ ଶତ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ନଦେଇ ରହି ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ଜାହାଜରେ ଧୋବାଘର ଅଛି, ଡାକଘର ଅଛି । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜଟି ଡାକବୋହିବା ଜାହାଜ । ଡାକଘରେ ନାନା ଦେଶର ଚିଠିପତ୍ରର ବ୍ୟାଗ ଅଛି । ଅନେକ ଭାରତୀୟ ଓ ଶ୍ୱେତାଙ୍ଗ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ସେହି ଡାକଘରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶ ଚିଠିବ୍ୟାଗଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଫିଟାଇ ଯେଉଁ ଚିଠି ଯେଉଁଠାକୁ ଯିବ ତାହା ବାଛି ଯଥାସ୍ଥାନରେ ସଜାଡ଼ି ରଖୁଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଜାହାଜ ପ୍ରତି ବନ୍ଦରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ମାତ୍ରକେ ସେଠାରେ ସେ ବନ୍ଦରର ଡାକଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଓହ୍ଲାଇଦେଉଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଡାକଘର ଦେଖିସାରି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଖାଇବାଘରକୁ ଗଲୁଁ । ଏଠାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଚାରିଶତ ଲୋକଙ୍କପାଇଁ ବସିବାର ଓ ଖାଇବାର ପୃଥକ୍ ପୃଥକ୍ ଆସନ ସଜ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇଅଛି । ଘରଟି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବରେ ସଜ୍ଜିତ । ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଯେଉଁ ରଙ୍ଗଦେଲେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦିଶିବ । ସେହିପରି ରଙ୍ଗର ଲତା ପୁଷ୍ପପତ୍ର ସେହି ଘରର କାନ୍ଥରେ ଅଙ୍କିତ ହୋଇଅଛି । ଘରର କାନ୍ଥ ଓ ଛାତ ଓକ୍ ନାମକ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର କାଠରେ ନିର୍ମିତ । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଅବଲୁସ କାଠର ଯେପରି ଆଦର, ବିଲାତରେ ଓକ୍ କାଠର ସେହିପରି । ଆଦର ଟେବୁଲ ଉପରେ ଖାନାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପରିପାଟ ରୂପେ ସୁସଜ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇ ରଖାଯାଇଅଛି । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେଉଁ କୋମ୍ପାନୀ ଜାହାଜରେ ଯାଇଥିଲୁ, ଉକ୍ତ କୋମ୍ପାନୀଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ବିଶେଷଯତ୍ନ । ଆମେ ତିନିଜଣ ଖାନା ପାଖରେ ବସିଲୁ । କେତେ ଜାତୀୟ ଜୀବନ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ବଧକରି ବିଲାତ ମସଲା ସଂଯୋଗରେ ବିଲାତି ଖାନା ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୋଇଅଛି । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଖାନା ଖାଇବୁ ନା ଘରର ଶୋଭା ଦେଖିବୁ, କିଛି ସ୍ଥିର କରିପାରିଲୁ ନାହିଁ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଖାଇବାପାଇଁ ସେ ଘରକୁ ଆସିଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କେହି ''କାଲାଆଦମି'' ଅଛନ୍ତି କି ନାହିଁ, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହିଁ ଏହି କଥା ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲୁଁ । ଦେଖିଲୁଁ ଯେ ଦୁଇଜଣ

କଳାମୁଖ ପୁରୁଷ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଅପରିଚିତ । ତଥାପି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ମନରେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଜନ୍ମିଲା । ଭାବିଲୁ ଏମାନେତ ଆମ ଦେଶର ଲୋକ ! ଯେତେବେଳେ ଜାହାଜରେ କେବଳ ଗୋରାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ଦେଖି ମନରେ ବିତୃଷ୍ଣା ଜାତ ହେବ ଓ ଆତ୍ମୀୟ ସ୍ୱଜନଙ୍କପାଇଁ ପ୍ରାଣ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ହେବ, ସେତେବେଳେ ଏହି ଦିଓଟି ଦେଶୀୟ ମୁଖ ଦେଖିଲେ ମନ କେତେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ସୁସ୍ଥିର ହେବ । ଏହା ଭାବି ଖାଇବସିଲୁଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଖାନାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଦେଖି ପ୍ରାଣ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ହୋଇଉଠିଲା, ତହିଁ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ରୁଚିର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କିଛି ଖାଦ୍ୟ ବାଛିକରି ଖାଇଲୁଁ ଓ ଅତୃପ୍ତଚିତ୍ତରେ ସେଠାରୁ ଉଠିଲୁଁ ।

ଜାହାଜର ନଙ୍ଗର ଉଠିଲା ଓ ଜାହାଜ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଆଡ଼କୁ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଅସ୍ତପ୍ରାୟ । ମଙ୍ଗ ନିକଟରେ ଠିଆହୋଇ ମୁଁ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ତୀର ଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହିଁ ରହିଲି । ଦେଖିଲି, ଆକାଶ ମେଘାଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ, ସମୁଦ୍ରର ଜଳ ହରିତବର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ତୀରର ରେଖ ନୀଳାଭ ଓ ଉକ୍ତ ନିଳାଭ ରେଖା କ୍ରମଶଃ ଦିଗବଳୟରେ ମିଶିଯାଇଅଛି । କ୍ରମଶଃ କେମ୍ୱେର ବନ୍ଦର ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ହେଲା ଓ ଜାହାଜ ଗଭୀର ଜଳକୁ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଲା । ଆରବ ଉପସାଗରର ମହାତରଙ୍ଗମାନ ସୁବୃହତ ମାଲଡେରିୟା ଜାହାଜକୁ ଇତସ୍ତତଃ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ କଲା । ତରଙ୍ଗ ଆଘାତରେ ଜାହାଜ ଦୋହଲିବାରୁ ଜାହାଜର ଛାତରେ ଠିଆହେବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇଉଠିଲା । ଏହା ଅନୁଭବ କରି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ କୋଠରି ଆଡ଼କୁ ସାବଧାନଭାବରେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଲୁଁ ଓ କୋଠରି ଭିତରେ ଆଶ୍ରୟ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲୁ । ଯେ ଯାହାର ଖଟ ଉପରେ ଯାଇ ଶୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଲୁ । ଜାହାଜର ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଦେଖି ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ନିଜ ନିଜ କୋଠରୀରେ ଆଶ୍ରୟ ନେଲେ । ସମୁଦ୍ରର ତରଙ୍ଗ ବାଜି ଜାହାଜ ଭାରି ଦୋହଲେ । ଦୋହଲିବା ଯୋଗୁଁ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କର ମୁଣ୍ଡବୁଲା ଓ ବାନ୍ତି ହୁଏ । ଏହି ରୋଗକୁ ଇଂରାଜୀରେ Sea-sickness (ସମୁଦ୍ରରୋଗ) କହନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଓ ସରଳା ଏହି ପୀଡ଼ାରେ ଆକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହେଲୁଁ । ସରଳା ଏଥିପୂର୍ବେ କେବେ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଯାତ୍ରା କରିନଥିଲେ ଓ ଜାହାଜରେ ବସିଲେ ଯେ ଏ ରୋଗ ଧରେ, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏକଥା ଜଣା ନଥିଲା । ସୁତରାଂ ହଠାତ୍ ଏପରି ହେବାର କାରଣ ବୁଝି ନପାରି ସେ ଅସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଲେ ଓ କହିଲେ, ବାପରେ ବାପ୍ ! ଏପରି ହେବ ବୋଲି ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ମୁଁ ଆସିନଥାନ୍ତି ପରା !'' ଏ କଥା ଶୁଣି ମତେ ହସ ମାଡ଼ିଲା ଓ ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏଥର କାରଣ ବୁଝାଇଦେଲି । ସେ ରାତିରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆହାରାଦି କିଛି ହେଲା ନାହିଁ ।

ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ କୋଠରିରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖାଁଏ କଳଘଣ୍ଟା ଅଛି । ସେ ଘଣ୍ଟାକୁ ଟିପି ଦେଲେ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀ ଆସି ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଚାକରାଣୀକୁ ଡାକି କହିଲି, ''ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ କଷ୍ଟ ହେଉଅଛି, ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ କଣ କରିବୁ ? '' ସେ ହସି ହସି ଉତ୍ତର କଲା, ଆଜି ସମୁଦ୍ର ବେଶସ୍ଥିର । ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେହ ଅସୁସ୍ଥହୋଇଛି । ଏକଥା ଆଦୌ ଭାବନାକର ନାହିଁ ।'' ସେ ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେଇ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ

ବିଦାୟ ନେଲେ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ନିଦ୍ରାଯିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲୁଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ କେତେ କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା, ମନ ଭାରି ଘାଣ୍ଟିହେଲା । ଅଗତ୍ୟା ଆଉ ନିଦ୍ରା ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାରେ ଅନିଦ୍ରା ଓ ତନ୍ଦ୍ରାରେ ସେ କାଳରାତ୍ରି କଟିଗଲା । ତହିଁ ଆରଦିନ ଭୋର ବେଳେ ଚାକରାଣୀ ଆସି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିଲା, ''କଣ ଖାଇବ ?'' ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଅନିଚ୍ଛା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାରୁ ସେ କହିଲା, ''ନ ଖାଇଲେ ଅଧିକ କଷ୍ଟ ପାଇବ ।'' ଏହା କହି ଦୁଇ ତାଟିଆ ଖାଦ୍ୟ (Cornflour) ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ରଖି ଦେଇଗଲା ।

ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ କୋଠରିରେ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସକାଳେ କଫି, ଚା ଓ କିଛି ଫଳ ଖାଇବାପାଇଁ ରଖି ଦେଇଯାନ୍ତି । ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ମୁହଁ ହାତ ଧୋଇ ବିଛଣାରେ ଶୋଇ ଶୋଇ ସେ ଖାଦ୍ୟଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉଦରସାତ୍ କରନ୍ତି । ଅଧୁଆ ମୁହଁରେ ଓ ଅଘସାପାଟିରେ କିଛି ଖାଇବାର ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ନାହିଁ, ସୁତରାଂ ବହୁ କଷ୍ଟରେ ବିଛଣାରୁ ଉଠି ମୁହଁ ହାତ ଧୋଇ ଉକ୍ତ ଖାଦ୍ୟରୁ ଦୁଇଚାମଚ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଖାଇଲୁଁ ।

ସରଳା ସେ ଦିନ ସ୍ନାନ କଲେ । ମୋ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ରଖି ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁକରଣ କରିବାକୁ ସାହସୀ ହେଲି ନାହିଁ । ସେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ତେଲ ଲଗାଇ ସ୍ନାନ କଲେ ଓ ସ୍ନାନ କରି ସାରି ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧି କେଶ ଉନ୍ମୁକ୍ତ କରି ଗୋଟିଏ ଚଉକିରେ ଗୋଡ଼ ଉଠାଇ ବସି ବାଳ ଶୁଖାଇଲେ; ମୁଁ ଦୁଇ ତିନିଟା କମ୍ବଳ ଓ ଶାଲ୍ ଘୋଡ଼ି ହୋଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ଚଉକିରେ ପଡ଼ିରହିଲି । ଚଉକି ଉପରେ ସିଧାହୋଇ ବସିପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ । ଆରବ ସାଗରରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଢେଉର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଏତେ ଅସ୍ଥିରତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ନଚାଉଥିଲା । ପ୍ରକାଣ୍ଡ ଢେଉ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜାହାଜର ଚାରିପାଖରେ ଆଘାତ କରୁଥିଲା । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଜାହାଜ ଏଣେ ତେଣେ ସବେଗରେ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଏ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନର ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ଅନୁଭବୀ ବ୍ୟତିରେକେ ଅନ୍ୟ କେହି ବୁଝିବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ । ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଅଭୂତପୂର୍ବ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଜାତ ହେଲା । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜଟି ଡାକ (Mail)ବୋହିବା ଜାହାଜ, ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଏହାର ଗତି ଅତି ଦ୍ରୁତ । ଜାହାଜର ଦ୍ରୁତଗତିଯୋଗୁଁ ସମୁଦ୍ରର ଅତଳ ବାରିରାଶି ଦ୍ୱିଧାବିଭକ୍ତ ହେବାରୁ ଢେଉ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜାହାଜର ଦୁଇପାଖରେ ବାଜି ପ୍ରତିଘାତଦ୍ୱାରା ଉପରକୁ ଉଠୁଥିଲା ଓ ପରକ୍ଷଣରେ ନିମ୍ନମୁଖରେ ଶତଖଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇ ସମୁଦ୍ରବକ୍ଷରେ ପଡୁଥିଲା ସେହି ଉର୍ମିରାଶି ଉପରେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟକିରଣ ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ ହୋଇ ନାନାବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ଶତ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଧନୁର ବିଚିତ୍ରତା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନୟନର ତୃପ୍ତି ସାଧନ କରୁଥିଲା । ସେ ନୈସର୍ଗିକ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଶରୀରରେ ନବ ବଳର ସଞ୍ଚାର କରାଇ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ବାସ୍ତବ ଜଗତର ଅନୁଭବଠାରୁ ବହୁଦୂରକୁ ଟାଣି ନେଉଥିଲା । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ତିନିଜଣ ଯାକ ଜାହାଜର ଡେକ୍ (ଛାତ) ଉପରେ ବସି ଶୋଇ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର କାଳଯାପନ କଲୁଁ । ସେ ଦିନ ଶାରୀରିକ ଦୁର୍ବଳତା ଓ ମନର ଅସ୍ଥିରତା ଯୋଗୁଁ ଆହାର ପ୍ରତି ବିଶେଷ ସ୍ପୃହା ନଥିଲା । ଦିନଯାକ ଛାତ ଉପରେ ବସି ରାତିରେ

ନିଜ ନିଜ କୋଠରିରେ ଆଶ୍ରୟ ନେଲୁଁ । ଏହିପରି ପାଞ୍ଚଦିନ ଅତୀତ ହେଲା । କେବଳ ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏହି ଦଶା ଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ହୋଇଥିଲା, ତାହା ନୁହେଁ । ଇଂରେଜ ସହଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ପାଞ୍ଚଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ କୋଠରିରୁ ବାହାରକୁ ବାହାରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ପୁରୁଷ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କେହି କେହି ଇତିମଧ୍ୟରେ ଥରେ ଅଧେ ଜାହାଜର ଛାତ ଉପରକୁ ଆସୁଥାନ୍ତି । କଥା ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗରେ ସେମାନେ କହୁଥାନ୍ତି ଯେ ଭଲ ପାଗ (Fine weather) ହୋଇଛି । ଏକଥା ଶୁଣି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ହସୁଥାଉଁ ।

ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ୬ ତାରିଖ ସକାଳେ ବହୁଦୂରରୁ ଦିଗ୍‌ବଳୟରେ (Horizon) କଳାମେଘ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଏଡ଼େନ୍ ନଗରର କ୍ଷୀଣ ଛାୟା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଗୋଚର ହେଲା । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କେହି କେହି ଦୁରବୀକ୍ଷଣ ଯନ୍ତ୍ର (Binocular) ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ କେହି ବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟଚକ୍ଷୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଏଡ଼େନ୍‌ନଗରକୁ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟରୂପେ ଦେଖିବାଲାଗି ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲେ । କ୍ରମେ ଆରବ ଉପସାଗର ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ ଭାବ ଧାରଣ କଲା । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଏଡ଼େନର ନିକଟବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ହେଲୁ; ଦୂରରୁ ଯାହା କଳାମେଘ ପରି ଦିଶୁଥିଲା, ନିକଟବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ହେବାରୁ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପାହାଡ଼ ବୋଲି ଜଣାଗଲା । ଦେଖିଲୁଁ, ସମୁଦ୍ର ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଧୀବରମାନଙ୍କର ଦୁଇ ଚାରିଖଣ୍ଡି ନୌକା ଯାଉଅଛି । ୫/୬ ଦିନ ପରେ ଅନୁଜ ବୃକ୍ଷଲତାଦି ଶୂନ୍ୟପାହାଡ଼ ଦେଖି ମନ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଲା । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜ ଏଡ଼େନ ବନ୍ଦରରେ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏଠାରେ ଜାହାଜ ତିନିଘଣ୍ଟା ମାତ୍ର ରହିଲା । ଇତିମଧ୍ୟରେ ମୁଁ ଓ ସରଳା ଜାହାଜ ଉପରେ ଠିଆହୋଇ ସୋମାଲି ପିଲାଙ୍କର ନାଚ ଦେଖିଲୁ ଓ ଯେଉଁ ଡାକଥଳିଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ଚିଠିପତ୍ର ଏଡ଼େନ୍ ଠିକଣାରେ ଆସିଥିଲା, ସେ ଥଳିଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଆମ ଜାହାଜରୁ ଉତାରି ଦିଆଯିବାର ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖିଲୁଁ । ଏଡ଼େନ୍ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଲୋହିତ ସାଗରରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲୁଁ । ଏଠାରେ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଖୁବ୍ ସ୍ଥିର ଓ ଜାହାଜଟି ଆଉ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ପିଲାଦିନେ ମୁଁ ମନରେ ବିଚାରୁଥିଲି ଯେ ଲୋହିତ ସାଗରର ଜଳ ଲାଲ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦେଖିଲି ଯେ ଏଠାର ଜଳର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆରବ ସାଗର ଜଳର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସମାନ । ଏହି ସାଗରରେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ଜଳରାଶି ଭେଦ କରି ବୃକ୍ଷଲତାଦି ଶୂନ୍ୟ ପାହାଡ଼ମାନ ଉଠିଅଛି । ଦୂରରୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଯେ ଏହି ପାହାଡ଼ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଧାଡ଼ି ଧାଡ଼ି ହୋଇରହିଛି । ଏଗୁଡ଼ୀକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜାହାଜ ଯିବାର ବାଟ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଜାହାଜ ଯେତିକି ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଉଥାଏ, ଦେଖାଯାଏ ଯେ ଏ ପାହାଡ଼ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଖଣ୍ଡ ଖଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇ ଅଲଗା ରହିଅଛି ଓ ପାହାଡ଼ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜାହାଜ ଯିବା ପାଇଁ ବାଟ ଅଛି । ଏହିଠାରେ ଦେଖିଲୁଁ ଯେ ଏକପ୍ରକାର କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ମାଛଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ ଡେଣା ଅଛି ଓ ସେହି ଡେଣା ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଏମାନେ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଉପରେ କିଛି କାଳପାଇଁ ଉଡୁ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଓ ପୁନର୍ବାର ପାଣିରେ ପଡୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏହି ମାଛଙ୍କୁ ଧରିବା ପାଇଁ ଏକ ଜାତୀୟ ପକ୍ଷୀ (ସୀଗଲ୍) ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପଛରେ ଗୋଡ଼ାଉ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସମୁଦ୍ରରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ମାଛ ପହଁରୁଥିବାର ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖିଲୁଁ ।

ଲୋହିତ ସାଗରରେ ଆରବ ଉପସାଗର ପରି ଢେଉ ନାହିଁ ଓ ସେଥିଯୋଗୁଁ ଜାହାଜ ଗତି କଲାବେଳେ ଆଉ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଜାହାଜରେ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦତା ବୋଧ କଲେ ଓ ନିଜ ନିଜ କୋଠରିରୁ ବାହାରି ଜାହାଜର ଛାତ ଉପରକୁ ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି ହୋଇ ଆସିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ଦେଖିଲୁଁ, ପ୍ରଥମଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ଯାଉଥିବା ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କର ସଂଖ୍ୟା ପ୍ରାୟ ଚାଳିଶ । ସେଥିମଧ୍ୟରେ ବିଚାରବିଭାଗର ଉଚ୍ଚପଦସ୍ଥ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ସାହେବ ଥିଲେ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ତିନିଜଣ ମେମ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥିଲେ । ଏହି ସାହେବ ଓ ମେମ୍‌ମାନଙ୍କ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ ଆଳାପ ପରିଚୟ ହେଲା ଓ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ସମୟରେ ମୁଁ, ସରଳା, ଫାଇଜି ବିବି ଓ ମେମ୍‌ମାନେ ଏକତ୍ର ବସି ଗଳ୍ପ କରି କାଳ କଟାଉଥିଲୁଁ । ମେମ୍‌ମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଘନିଷ୍ଠତା ବଢ଼ିଲା ଓ ସେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଘରୋଇଭାବରେ ମିଳିମିଶି ଅମାୟିକ ଭାବରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରୁଥିଲେ । ଦିନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଜଣେ ମେମ୍ ମୋତେ ପଚାରିଲେ ''ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଳିମିଶି କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ହେବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି କି ନାହିଁ, ଏ କଥା ଜାଣିବାକୁ ମୋର ଇଚ୍ଛା ବଳିଅଛି । ମୋର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଯେ ସେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶିବାକୁ ଘୃଣା କରନ୍ତି ।'' ମୁଁ ଉତ୍ତର କଲି, ''ତୁମ୍ଭର ଏ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରୂପେ ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଅଟେ । ସେମାନେ ମିଶିବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି, କିନ୍ତୁ କାଳେ ତୁମ୍ଭେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଘୃଣା ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଦେଖିବ ଏହି ଭୟରେ ସେମାନେ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଦେଖ, ଆଜିକାଲି ତୁମ୍ଭଦେଶର ଅନେକ ଲୋକ ଆମ ଜାତିକୁ ଘୃଣାକରନ୍ତି ଓ ଆମ ଦେଶର ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଏପରି ଅଭଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ଯେ ଏହା ଦେଖି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ହୁଏ, ତୁମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ବନ୍ଧୁ ଭାବରେ ମିଳିତ ହେବାକୁ କଦାପି ଇଚ୍ଛୁକ ନୁହଁ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦୂରରେ ରହୁଁ ।'' ମେମ୍ କହିଲେ, ''ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ଅନ୍ତଃପୁରର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଉତ୍ତମ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନ୍ଦରମହଲରେ ବନ୍ଦକରି ରଖି କାହାରି ସହିତ ମିଶିବାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏଥିଯୋଗୁଁ ଆମ୍ଭଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମାନ କରନ୍ତିନାହିଁ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଅଭଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ।'' ମୁଁ ଉତ୍ତର କଲି, ''ଏ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ତୁମ୍ଭମତ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମୋ ମତ ମିଳିବ ନାହିଁ । ଅତଏବ ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ଆଉ ତର୍କ କରିବା ଉଚିତ ବୋଧ ହେଉ ନାହିଁ ।'' ଏହା କହି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଦିଗକୁ ଗଳ୍ପର ଗତି ଫେରାଇ ଅନ୍ୟ ବିଷୟ ପକାଇଲୁଁ ।

ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗିନୀ ଫାଇଜି ବିବି ଗଳ୍ପ କରିବା ବିଷୟରେ ବିଶେଷ ପଟୁ । ତାଙ୍କର କଳ୍ପନାର ମାତ୍ରା ଅଧିକ, ସେଥିଯୋଗୁଁ ସେ କଥା କହିବାବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନେ କାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣିଲାପରି ମନ୍ତ୍ରମୁଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ନିବିଷ୍ଟ ଚିତ୍ତରେ ଶୁଣୁ । ଫାଇଜି ବିବିଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସାଦରୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆଳସ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଜଳଯାତ୍ରାର ଦିନଗୁଡ଼ିକ ବେଶ ସ୍ଫୁର୍ତ୍ତିରେ କଟିଗଲା ।

ଜାହାଜରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୈଠକ୍‌ଖାନା ଅଛି । ସେ କୋଠରିରେ ବାଦ୍ୟଯନ୍ତ୍ର ଲେଖିବାର ମେଜ, କାଗଜ,କଲମ, କାଳି, ଚଉକି ଗଦିଦିଆ କାଉଚ ଅଛି । ସେଠାରେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ବସି ଗଳ୍ପ ଓ ଆମୋଦ କରନ୍ତି । ଯାହାଙ୍କର ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ମନ ହୁଏ, ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଯୋଡ଼ିଏ କାଚ ଆଲମାରିରେ ଗଳ୍ପ ପୁସ୍ତକ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇ ରହିଅଛି ।

ଆମ ଜାହାଜରେ କେତେଜଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ପୁରୁଷ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ଥିଲେ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ସରକାରୀ ବୃତ୍ତିପାଇ କୃଷିବିଦ୍ୟା ଶିଖିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ବିଲାତ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀପାଇଁ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଭଡ଼ା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ବେଶି ଭଡ଼ା ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର କୋଠରି ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର କୋଠରି ପରି, କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର କୋଠରି ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜାହାଜ ମଝିରେ ଓ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର କୋଠରୀ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜାହାଜର ଏକ ପ୍ରାନ୍ତରେ ଥାଏ, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଜାହାଜ ଦୋହଲିଲାବେଳେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ବେଶି ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ ହୁଏ ଓ ଏଥିଯୋଗୁଁ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ସାମୁଦ୍ରିକ ଅସ୍ଥିରତା ଯୋଗୁଁ ବେଶି କଷ୍ଟ ପାନ୍ତି । ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚାରିଥର ଖାଇବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଯାତ୍ରିମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାତଥର ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦିଆଯାଏ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟଶ୍ରେଣୀକୁ ଯାଇ ପାରନ୍ତି, କିନ୍ତୁ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଯାାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀକୁ ଯାଇ ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ଛମହଲା ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ଚାରିମହଲା । ଏ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ସର୍ବୋଚ୍ଚ ଛାଡ଼ ଖୁବ ପ୍ରଶସ୍ତ ଓ ଦୀର୍ଘ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଏହି ଛାତ ଉପରେ କ୍ରିକେଟ୍ ଟେନିସ୍ ଓ ବାଡ଼ମିଂଟନ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଖେଳ ଖେଳନ୍ତି । ଏହି ଛାତ ଉପରେ ଥିଏଟର ଯାତ୍ରା ହୁଏ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦେଖିଲୁ ଯେ ଜଣେ ମଧ୍ୟସ୍ଥ ପରିଚିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପରିଚୟ କରାଇ ନଦେଲେ ଜଣେ ଅପରିଚିତ ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆଳାପ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସାଧାରଣତଃ ଦେଖୁଁଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜଣେ ଅପରିଚିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଆଉ ଜଣେ ଅପରିଚିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କର ଦେଖା ହେଲେ ଅଳ୍ପ ସମୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଆଳାପ ପରିଚୟ ହୋଇଯାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଜାହାଜର ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଦେଖିଲି ଯେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ଅପରିଚିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଏକ କୋଠରିରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ଏକ ଟେବୁଲ ପାଖରେ ବସି ଖାନା ଖାଉଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏହିପରି ପନ୍ଦର ଦିନ ଗଲା, ଅଥଚ ଜଣେ ମଧ୍ୟସ୍ଥ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଉଭୟଙ୍କୁ ମିଳାଇ ନଦେବାରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଆଦୌ ଆଳାପ ପରିଚୟ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଜାହାଜର ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ପାଦ୍ରୀ ଓ ସାଧାରଣ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଯାନ୍ତି । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଏତେ ଆଦବକାଏଦା ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନେ ପରସ୍ପର ମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିଜେ ନିଜେ ଆଳାପ ପରିଚୟ କରି ନିଅନ୍ତି ।

ପୂର୍ବେ ଶୁଣିଥିଲି, ଇଂରାଜମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ ଖାନ୍ତି । ଜାହାଜରେ ପନ୍ଦର ଦିନ ରହି ଏ ବିଷୟ ସ୍ୱଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଦେଖିଲି । ସକାଳ ୬ଟା ବେଳେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ବିଛଣାରୁ ନ ଉଠୁଣୁ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନେ କୋଠରିରେ ଆଣି ଚା, ରୁଟି, ମଖନ, ବିସ୍କୁଟ ଓ କେତେକ

ଫଳ ଦେଇଯାନ୍ତି । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉଦରସ୍ଥ କରନ୍ତି । ତଦ୍‌ପରେ ସକାଳ ୯ଟା ବେଳେ ପ୍ରାତଃ ଭୋଜନର (Breakfast) ଘଂଟା ବାଜେ, ଘଂଟା ଶୁଣି ସମସ୍ତେ ଭୋଜନାଗାରକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । ସେଠାରେ ମେଜ ଉପରେ ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଫଳ, ମାଛ, ମାଂସ, ଡିମ୍ବ ଓ ଶାକସବଜୀରେ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଦଶ ବାର ପ୍ରକାର ତରକାରୀ, ଭାତ, ଲେମନେଡ଼ ବରଫ, ସୋଡ଼ା, କଫି ମଦ ଏହିପରି ନାନାବିଧ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଓ ପାନୀୟ ସଜ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଯାହାର ଯାହା ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏ, ସେ ତାହା ଖାନ୍ତି ପୁଣି ଦିନ ସାଢ଼େ ୧୧ଟା ବେଳେ ଯାହାଙ୍କର ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏ, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନେ ଗୋମାଂସର ସୁରୁଆ ଓ ବିସ୍କୁଟ ଆଣି ଦେଇଯାନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଏହା ନ ଖାନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦୁଧ ଓ କିଛି ଫଳ ଖାଇବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ଦିନ ଗୋଟାଏ ବାଜିଲାବେଳେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜଳଯୋଗ (Luncheon) କରିବାକୁ ଭୋଜନାଗାରକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । ସକାଳ ୯ଟା ବେଳେ ଯେପରି ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ଏ ସମୟରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେହିପରି ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଖାଦ୍ୟ ମେଜ ଉପରେ ଥାଏ । ଚାରି ବାଜିଲା ବେଳକୁ ଅପରାହ୍ନର ଚା ପାନ (Afternoon tea) । ସେ ସମୟରେ ଚା, କଫି, ରୁଟି, ମଖନ, ମହନଭୋଗ ଓ ପିଠା ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଯେ ଯାହାର ରୁଚିମତେ ଖାନ୍ତି । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ୭ଟା ବେଳେ ମାଛ ମାଂସ ରେ ତିଆରି ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଖାଦ୍ୟ ମିଳେ । ରାତି ସାଢ଼େ ନଅ ଘଂଟା ବେଳକୁ ରାତ୍ର ଭୋଜନ (Supper) ହୁଏ । ସେତେବେଳେ ରୁଟି, ମଖନ ଓ ମାଂସ ମିଶ୍ରିତ ପିଠା (Sandwich) ଖାଇବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ଯାହାଙ୍କର ଯାହା ଇଚ୍ଛା, ସେ ଦିନଯାକ ଏହିପରି ଖାଉଥାନ୍ତି । ଇଂରେଜ ମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି କ୍ଷୁଧାଦେବୀ ଭାରି ପ୍ରସନ୍ନା । ଯେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭୋଜନର ମାତ୍ରା ଦେଖି ନାହାନ୍ତି, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏ ଖାଦ୍ୟର ପରିମାଣ ବୁଝାଇବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ । ପ୍ରତି ଜାହାଜରେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କପାଇଁ ଦୁଇ ମାସର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଗଚ୍ଛିତ ଥାଏ । ଜାହାଜର ଭଣ୍ଡାରକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଗୋଟିଏ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ସହର ପରି ଜଣାଯାଏ । ଜାହାଜର ତଳ ମହଲାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ କୋଠରୀ ଅଛି । ସେ ଘର ଛାତଠାରୁ ତଳ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବନ୍ଧାକୋବି, ଫୁଲକୋବି, ଆଳୁ ପିଆଜ, ମଟର, ସିମ୍ବ, ବାଇଗଣ, ଶାଗ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ପରିବାପତ୍ରରେ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ୮୦୦/୯୦୦ ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେବାକୁ ଦୁଇମାସ ପାଇଁ କେତେ ପରିବାପତ୍ର ସଂଚିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ ତାହା ପାଠକମାନେ ଅନୁମାନଦ୍ୱାରା ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । ଆହୁରି ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବିଷୟର ଯେ ଏ ଫଳମୂଳଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଏତେଦିନ ଯାଏ ଅବିକୃତ ଭାବରେ ଥାଏ । ଜାହାଜର ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଠରିରେ ବରଫ ଥାଏ । ପରିବାଘରଟି ବରଫଘରକୁ ଲାଗିଅଛି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ପରିବାଘରଟି ମଧ୍ୟ ଥଣ୍ଡା ଥାଏ ଓ ସେଥିଯୋଗୁଁ ପରିବାପତ୍ରଯାକ ପଚି ସଢ଼ି ନ ଯାଇ ବରାବର ସତେଜ ଥାଏ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜାହାଜରେ ଦୁଧ ଯୋଗାଇବାପାଇଁ ଗୋରୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଥରେ ଭାବି ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ ଯେ ଏତେ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଦୁଧ ଯୋଗାଇବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଠେ ଗାଈ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଏତେ ଗାଈ ଓ ଏମାନଙ୍କର ଦୁଇମାସର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ଖାଦ୍ୟପାଇଁ କେତେ ସ୍ଥାନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ହୁଅନ୍ତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ବନ୍ଧିବଳରେ ଜାହାଜରେ ଗୋରୁ ରଖିବା ଅସୁବିଧାରୁ ତ୍ରାହି ପାଇଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଜାହାଜ ବିଲାତରୁ ବାହାରିଲାବେଳେ ଦୁଧ ଦୁହିଁ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଟିଣରେ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି କରି ସେ ଟିଣଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ବରଫ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ରଖିଦିଅନ୍ତି । ବରଫ ଭିତରେ ରହିବାରୁ ଏ ଦୁଧ ଦୁଇମାସ କାଳ ଅବିକୃତ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଥାଏ । ଯେଉଁ ଦୁଧକୁ ଓଳିଏ ନ ଆଉଟି ରଖି ଦେଲେ ଆର ଓଳିକୁ ଖଟା ହୋଇଯାଏ, ସେହି ଦୁଧକୁ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ବୁଦ୍ଧିବଳରେ ଦୁଇମାସ କାଳ ଅବିକୃତ ରଖିପାରନ୍ତି ।

ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେଉଁ ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧିଥାଉ, ସେହି ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧି କେଶବିନ୍ୟାସ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ନରଖି ଖାଇବାକୁ ଯାଉ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ତାହା କଦାପି କରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନେ ସ୍ୱଦେଶରେ ବିଦେଶରେ, ଜାହାଜରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଥାନ୍ତୁ, ଆହାର ସମୟରେ ବେଶପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଅପରାହ୍ନ ସାଢ଼େ ଛଅ ଘଣ୍ଟା ସମୟରେ ବସ୍ତ୍ର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନର ଘଣ୍ଟା ବାଜେ, ସେ ସମୟରେ, ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ନିଜ ନିଜ କୋଠରିକୁ ଯାଇ କେଶବିନ୍ୟାସକରି ଖାଇବା ଘରକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । ଜାହାଜରେ ସ୍ନାନର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ବେଶ ସୁନ୍ଦର । ବେଶି ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଥିବା ଜାହାଜରେ କେହି ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଗାଧୋଇବାପାଇଁ ୧୦ ମିନିଟରୁ ବେଶି ସମୟ ପାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ। ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଓ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ନାନାଗାର ଅଛି । ସ୍ନାନାଗାରରେ ଥଣ୍ଡା ଲୁଣପାଣି ଓ ଗରମ ଲୁଣପାଣିର ଦିଓଟି କୁଣ୍ଡ ଥାଏ ଓ କୁଣ୍ଡେ ମିଠା ପାଣି ଥାଏ । ଯେଉଁ ପାଣିରେ ଗାଧୋଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେବ, ସେ ପାଣିରେ ମନ ବୋଧକରି ଗାଧୋଇ ପାରିବ ! ସକାଳୁ ନଅଟା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସ୍ନାନର ସମୟ ।

ଜାହାଜରେ ଧୋବାର ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ ଅଛି । ଜାହାଜରେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କପାଇଁ ଯେଉଁ ଖଟ ଥାଏ, ସେ ଖଟର ବିଛଣା ଚାଦର, ଖାଇବା ମେଜ ଉପରର ଚାଦର, ଝାଡ଼ଣ, ତଉଲିଆ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଜାହାଜର ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି । ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଏଥିରୁ ହଜାରେ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଜାହାଜର ଧୋବା କାଚେ । ଏହା ଛଡ଼ା ଯେବେ କେହି ଯାତ୍ରୀ ସେ ଧୋବାକୁ ଲୁଗା କାଚିବାକୁ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ତାହାହେଲେ ଲୁଗା ଖଣ୍ଡିକ କାଚିବାପାଇଁ ଆଠଅଣା ଲେଖାଏଁ ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ଦିନକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଲୁଗା କାଚିଦିଏ ।

ଜାହାଜରେ କେହି ମରିଗଲେ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଣାଳିରେ ସେ ମୃତଦେହର ସତ୍କାରର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଛି । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ପୂର୍ବତନ କମିଶନର ଗ୍ରାଉସ୍ ସାହେବ ଓ କଲେକ୍ଟର ହେରେଲ୍ଡ୍ ସାହେବ ବିଲାତ ଯିବା ସମୟରେ ବାଟରେ ଜାହାଜରେ ମୃତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ ସତ୍କାର ଜାହାଜରେ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଜାହାଜରେ ବଢ଼େଇ ଅଛି । ମୃତଦେହ ରଖିବାପାଇଁ ସେ ବଢ଼େଇ କାଠର ସିନ୍ଧୁକ (Coffien) ତିଆରି କରିଦିଏ । ସେଥିରେ ଶବଟି ରଖା ଗଲାରୁ ଧର୍ମଯାଜକ (ପାଦ୍ରୀ) କିମ୍ବା ଯେଉଁ ଜାହାଜରେ ପାଦ୍ରୀ ନ ଥାନ୍ତି ସେ ଜାହାଜର କପ୍ତାନ ସାହେବ ମୃତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମାର ସଦଗତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଉପାସନା କରନ୍ତି । ଏହାପରେ ସେ ସିନ୍ଧୁକକୁ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ତାହା ଭିତରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ନିଦା ଲୁହା ଗୋଳା ରଖି ସିନ୍ଧୁକଟି ବନ୍ଦକରି ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଓ ସିନ୍ଧୁକଟିକୁ ଦଉଡ଼ିରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଜାହାଜ ଉପରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ସମୁଦ୍ର ମଧ୍ୟକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦିଅନ୍ତି ।

ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟାନ୍‌ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଉପାସନା କରିବାର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଅଛି । ଭୋଜନ ବାରରେ ଉପାସନା ହୁଏ । ଦିନ ସାଢ଼େ ଏଗାରଟା ବେଳେ ଉପାସନା କରିବାପାଇଁ ଘଣ୍ଟା ବାଜେ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଉପାସନା କରିବାପାଇଁ ସେଠାକୁ ଆସନ୍ତି; ଏ ଉପାସନାରେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଯାତ୍ରିମାନେ ମଧ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ପାରନ୍ତି । ଜାହାଜର ପାଦ୍ରୀ ଉପାସନା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାହ କରନ୍ତି । ଯଦିଚ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟାନ, ତଥାପି ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଉପାସନା ବେଳେ ସେଠାରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ଏହା ବଡ଼ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବିଷୟ ।

ଇଂରେଜ ଜାତି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆମୋଦପ୍ରିୟ । ସେମାନେ ଆମୋଦନ ନ କରି ରହିପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପନ୍ଦର ଦିନର ଜଳଯାତ୍ରା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଆଳସ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବୋଧହୁଏ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଜାହାଜରେ ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଆମୋଦର ଆୟୋଜନ ଅଛି । ବାଜି ରଖିବା ଓ ଜୁଆ ଖେଳିବା ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଆମୋଦ । ଏହାଛଡ଼ା ଗୀତ, ବାଦ୍ୟ, ନାଟ, ଥିଏଟର ଇତ୍ୟାଦିରେ ସେମାନେ ସମୁଦ୍ରଯାତ୍ରାର ଦିବସଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଅତିବାହିତ କରନ୍ତି ।

ଏହି ଜାହାଜରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଅନେକ ନାବିକ ଓ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ରବିବାର ଦିନ କପ୍ତାନ୍ ସାହେବ ଜାହାଜର ସମସ୍ତ ନାବିକ ଓ କର୍ମଚାରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଥରେ ଦେଖନ୍ତି । ନାବିକମାନେ ଶୁଭ୍ର ପାଇଜାମା ଓ କୁର୍ତ୍ତାପିନ୍ଧି ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଲାଲ ରୁମାଲ ବାନ୍ଧି ଏକ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଶ୍ରେଣୀବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ଦଣ୍ଡାୟମାନ ହୁଅନ୍ତି, ଅନ୍ୟପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ମାନେ ଶୁଭ୍ର ପାଇଜାମା ଓ ଚପକନପିନ୍ଧି ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଲାଲପାଟ ବାନ୍ଧି ଶ୍ରେଣୀବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ଠିଆ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ପ୍ରାୟ ଦୁଇଶତ । ଜଣେ ଉଚ୍ଚପଦସ୍ଥ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ବଂଶୀ (Bugle) ବଜାନ୍ତି, କପ୍ତାନ୍ ସାହେବ ଉପାସନା ପରେ ଆଗମନ କରନ୍ତି; ନାବିକ ଓ କର୍ମଚାରୀମାନେ କପ୍ତାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଭିବାଦନ କରି ଶ୍ରେଣୀବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ସ୍ୱ ସ୍ୱ କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନକୁ ଚାଲିଯାନ୍ତି ।

ଏହିରୂପେ ତିନିଦିନ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଲୋହିତ ସାଗରରେ ଥାଇ ଚତୁର୍ଥଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ବାରଟା ସମୟରେ (୧୦ ତାରିଖ ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର) ସୁୟେଜ ଖାଲରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲୁ । ଜାହାଜ ଏହିଠାରେ ସ୍ଥଗିତ ହେଲା । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସୁଏଜଖାଲର ପ୍ରବେଶ ମୁଖରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ହେବାମାତ୍ରକେ ଫରାସୀ ଦେଶର ଜଣେ ଡାକ୍ତର ଓ ଜଣେ ଡାକ୍ତରାଣୀ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରିବାପାଇଁ ଜାହାଜକୁ ଆସିଲେ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ (ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ସମସ୍ତ ଯାତ୍ରୀ) ଖାଇବା ଘରେ ଆସି ବସିଲୁଁ । ଜାହାଜର ପ୍ରଧାନ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକଙ୍କ ନାମ ଧରି ଡାକିଲେ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମୁଖଦେଇ ଡେକ୍ ଉପରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ଡାକ୍ତର ଡାକ୍ତରାଣୀ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେ ଯେ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କାହାରି କିଛି ରୋଗ ନାହିଁ, ସୁତରାଂ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ମନରେ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଜାହାଜ ଖାଲ ମୁଖରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲା । ଦୂରରୁ ଏହା ଏଡ଼େ ସଙ୍କୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମନେ ହେଉଥିଲା ଯେ ଭାବୁଥିଲି ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜାହାଜ କିପରି ଯିବ ? ଖାଲମଧଦେଇ ଜାହାଜ ସମସ୍ତ ରାତ୍ରି ଧୀର ଗତିରେ ଚାଲିଲା, ଦୁଇ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ତରୁହୀନ ବାଲୁକା ପ୍ରାନ୍ତର, କେବଳ

ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ଯତ୍ନବର୍ଦ୍ଧିତ ସାନ ସାନ ଗଛଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଆରାମପ୍ରଦ ବୋଧ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଅନେକ ରାତ୍ରରେ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଉଦିତ ହେଲା, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ କ୍ଷୀଣ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରାଲୋକରେ ଦେଖିଲୁଁ, ଦୁଇ ତୀରରେ କେବଳ ବାଲୁକାରାଶି । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ କ୍ୟାବିନ ଖିଡ଼ିକି ଫିଟାଇ ସେହି ଅନନ୍ତ ବାଲୁକାରାଶି ଦେଖୁଥିଲୁ । କାରଣ ଅନେକ ଦିବସ ଜଳରାଶି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଥାଇଁ ବିରକ୍ତ ବୋଧ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଭୋର ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ସମୟରେ ସେଇବନ୍ଦରରେ (Port Seyd) ଜାହାଜ ନଙ୍ଗର କଲା । ଏହି ବନ୍ଦରଟି ଅତି ସୁନ୍ଦର, ସକାଳେ ଆହାର କରି ଗୋଟିଏ ବୋଟରେ ବସି ସେଲ ସାହେବ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ପତ୍ନୀ, ପିଉସାହେବ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ପତ୍ନୀ, ସରଳା ଓ ମୁଁ ବନ୍ଦର ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଗଲୁ ।

ବନ୍ଦରରେ ନାନା ଦେଶର ଲୋକ ଦୋକାନ କରି ବସବାସ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ଗ୍ରୀକ୍, ଫରାସୀ, ସୋମାଲୀ (ଏଡ଼େନ୍‌ବାସୀ), ମିଶରୀ, ଇଂରେଜ, ତୁର୍କୀ ପ୍ରଭୃତି କେତେ ଜାତିର କେତେ କେତେ ଲୋକ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଜଣାନାହିଁ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦୋକାନମାନ ଦେଖି, ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଫଳ କିଣି, ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ବୁଲି କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଜାହାଜକୁ ଫେରିଆସିଲୁ । ଏଗାରଦିନ ପରେ ମାଟି ଉପରେ ଚାଲିବା କି ଆନନ୍ଦଜନକ ଜଳଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ସହଜରେ ବୁଝିପାରିବେ ।

ମୋର ଶରୀର ବଡ଼ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଥିଲା; ହଠାତ ଥଣ୍ଡା ଲାଗିବାରୁ ପିଠିରେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବ୍ୟଥା ଅନୁଭବ କରି ଶଯ୍ୟାଶାୟୀ ହେଲି । ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିବାକୁ କଷ୍ଟ ବୋଧ ହେଲା । ମୋର ଦୁଇ ସଙ୍ଗିନୀ କଷ୍ଟ ଦେଖି ମନେକଲେ, ମୁଁ ମରିଯିବି, ଫାଇଜି ବିବି ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କୁ ଖବର ଦେବାକୁ ଦୌଡ଼ିଗଲେ । ସେ ଯାଇଁ ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କୁ କହିଲେ, "Miss Das is dying" ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ମିସ୍ ଦାସ ମରୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ଡାକ୍ତର ଖାଇବା ଛାଡ଼ି ମୋ କ୍ୟାବିନକୁ ଦୌଡ଼ି ଆସିଲେ । ଆସି ଦେଖିଲେ, ମୋର ସମୁଦ୍ରପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ହେବାର କୌଣସି ଆଶଙ୍କା ନାହିଁ । ଡାକ୍ତର କହିଲେ, "ବ୍ୟଥା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଖରାପ , ତାହା ପାଇଁ କଷ୍ଟ ପାଇବାକୁ ହେବ ।" (ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କୁ ଭିଜିଟ ଦେବାକୁ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ, ଜାହାଜ ଭଡ଼ାରୁ ସେ ଭିଜିଟ ପାନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ କେତେଦିନ ସେ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାରେ ଶଯ୍ୟାଶାୟୀ ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆଳାପ ହୋଇଥିଲା ସେମାନେ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ମୋତେ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆସି ସହାନୁଭୂତି ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେଇଦିନ ବନ୍ଦରରେ ଜାହାଜ କିଛିକ୍ଷଣ ରହି ବନ୍ଦର ଛାଡ଼ିଲା । ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ୧୨ ତାରିଖରେ ଭୂମଧ୍ୟ ସାଗରରେ ଇୟୁରୋପର ଅଧିକାରରେ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲୁ' । ବାୟୁ ଶୀତଳ ହୋଇ ଆସିଲା, ଶୀତ ବସ୍ତ୍ର ନ ପିନ୍ଧି ଡେକ ଉପରକୁ ଯିବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା । ସମୁଦ୍ର ଗାଢ଼ ନୀଳବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଧାରଣ କଲା । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଇଟାଲୀର ତୀର ପ୍ରଦେଶ (Coast)ଦେଇ ଗଲୁଁ, ଦେଖିଲି, ସେଠାର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଅତି ସୁନ୍ଦର, ଏକ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ସିସିଲି ଅନ୍ୟ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଇଟାଲୀ, ଏଠାରେ ପାହାଡ଼ ମାନ ଗୃହ, ଚାଷଭୂମି, ଦ୍ରାକ୍ଷା ଲତାରେ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ; ଇଟାଲୀର ନଦୀ ଉପରର ପୋଲ ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖା ଯାଉଥିଲା ।

ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ପଶ୍ଚାତରେ ଏକ ଦିଗରେ ସିସିଲି ଅନ୍ୟଦିଗରେ ଇଟାଲୀ ରଖି Strait of Messina ପାରହୋଇ ପୁଣି ସେହି ଭୂମଧ୍ୟ ସାଗରକୁ ଆସିଲୁ । ଜାହାଜ ସବୁ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ପଶ୍ଚାତରେ

ରଖି ପଶ୍ଚିମାଭିମୁଖରେ ଚାଲିଲା । ଦୂରରୁ Strambaly ଦ୍ୱୀପ (ଏଠାରେ ଆଗ୍ନେୟ ଗିରି ଅଛି) କଳା ମେଘ ପରି ଦେଖାଗଲା ତତ୍‌ପରଦିନ ୧୩ ତାରିଖ ଅପରାହ୍ନ ୩ଟା ସମୟରେ ଏହି ଦ୍ୱୀପ ନିକଟକୁ ଆସିଲୁ । ପାହାଡ଼ଟି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉଚ୍ଚ ପାହାଡ଼କଡ଼ରେ ବୃହତ ବଗିଚା ଅଛି କିନ୍ତୁ ପାହାଡ଼ ଉପରେ ଆଗ୍ନେୟ ଗହ୍ୱର (Creter) ଅଛି । ଏହିରୂପେ ଦୁଇ ଦିନ ଭୂମଧ୍ୟସାଗରରେ ଥାଇଁ ୧୪ ତାରିଖ ପ୍ରାତଃ କାଳରେ ମାରଶେଲରେ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲୁ ।



ତ୍ରୟୋଦଶ ଭାଗ

ବିଲାତ ପ୍ରବାସ

ଲଣ୍ଡନ

ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ସ୍ୱଦେଶକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିଲି ମୋର ବନ୍ଧୁମାନେ ମୋତେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କଲେ, ''ଲଣ୍ଡନ କିପରି''? ମାତ୍ର ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଏ କଥା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବା କଠିନ ହେଲା । ଯେଉଁ ପକ୍ଷୀ ଗୋଟିଏ ପର୍ବତମଧ୍ୟସ୍ଥ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୃକ୍ଷର ଗୋଟିଏ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ଶାଖାରେ ତାହାର କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ବସା ବାନ୍ଧି ବସିଥାଏ, ସେହି ପକ୍ଷୀକୁ ପର୍ବତର ଆୟତନ ବିଷୟ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କଲେ, ସେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବା ତାହା ପକ୍ଷରେ ଯେପରି ଅସମ୍ଭବ ଓ କଷ୍ଟକର । ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ କିପରି ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବା ମଧ୍ୟ ତଦ୍ରୂପ ଅସମ୍ଭବ ଓ କଷ୍ଟକର, ଚିତ୍ରପଟରେ ସେହି ପର୍ବତକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ତାହାର ଆକାର ଅନୁଭୂତ ହୁଏ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପର୍ବତର କୌଣସି ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଦଣ୍ଡାୟମାନ ହେଲେ ତାହାର ଆକାର ବୁଝାଯାଏ ତାହିଁ । ଲଣ୍ଡନର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନଙ୍କର ମାନଚିତ୍ର ଅଛି, ସେଥିରୁ କିୟଦଂଶରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ କେତେ ବର୍ତ୍ତ ଅଛି ତାହା ବୁଝାଯାଏ, କିନ୍ତୁ ମାନଚିତ୍ରରେ ଅଟ୍ଟାଳିକା, ମନୁଷ୍ୟସମାଗମ ଚିହ୍ନିତ ନଥିବାରୁ ତଦ୍ୱାରା ସହରର ପ୍ରକୃତ ଅବସ୍ଥା ବୁଝାଯାଏନାହିଁ । ଥରେ ଆକାଶ ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିପାତ କରି ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ, ଅନାଦି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆକାଶ ମେଘ ଖଣ୍ଡଦ୍ୱାରା ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ମେଘ ନାହିଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମରେଖା ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଏବଂ ସେହି ମେଘଖଣ୍ଡ ମାନ କୃଷ୍ଣବର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ଶୁକ୍ଳବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ରଞ୍ଜିତ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଉକ୍ତ ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ରେଖା ସମୂହକୁ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ମର୍ତ୍ତ ଏବଂ ନାନା ବର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ରଞ୍ଜିତ ମେଘ ଖଣ୍ଡମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଟ୍ଟାଳିକା ରୂପେ ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ ଏବଂ ଭାବନ୍ତୁ ଯେ କେବଳ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିର ସୀମା ଭିତରେ ନୁହେଁ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିର ବହି ର୍ଦେଶରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହିପରି ବର୍ତ୍ମ ଓ ଅଟ୍ଟାଳିକା ଆଦିଅନ୍ତହୀନ ଆକାଶରେ ଖଞ୍ଜା ହୋଇ ରହିଛି, କେବଳ ଦେଖି ପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହର କଣ, ଏହି ପ୍ରକାର କଳ୍ପନାଦ୍ୱାରା ତାହା କିୟତ ପରିମାଣରେ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ ।

ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରବାଦ ବାକ୍ୟ ଅଛି, ଲଣ୍ଡନର ଆରମ୍ଭ ଓ ଶେଷ କେହି ଦେଖି ନାହିଁ; ପ୍ରବାଦଟି ପ୍ରଥମରେ ମିଥ୍ୟା ବୋଲି ବୋଧହୁଏ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ତାହା ନୁହେଁ । କାରଣ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହର ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ଲାଭ କରୁଅଛି । ତର୍ହିର ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱସ୍ଥ ସ୍ଥାନମାନଙ୍କରେ ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହର ନୂତନ ବସତି ହେଉଅଛି । ସମସ୍ତ ଦେଶର ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ରାଜନୀତିକ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା, ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା, ବିଦ୍ୟାଶିକ୍ଷା ଏବଂ ଉକ୍ତ ଶିକ୍ଷାର ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଜୀବନର ଉପଯୋଗୀ ପଦାର୍ଥ ମାନ ଏବଂ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ସର୍ବବିଧ ସୁଖାଭିଳାକ୍ଷ ତୃପ୍ତ କରିବାର ବସ୍ତୁମାନ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ଅଳ୍ପସ୍ଥାନରେ ଏକତ୍ର ହୋଇଅଛି । ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ପ୍ଳୀହାରୋଗ ହେଲେ ଯେ ପ୍ରକାର ସମସ୍ତ ଶରୀରର ରକ୍ତ ପ୍ଳୀହା ନିକଟସ୍ଥ ସ୍ଥାନମାନଙ୍କରେ

ଅଧିକ ପରିମାଣରେ ସଞ୍ଚାରିତ ସହରର ମାଟିତଳେ ଅନବରତ ରେଳ ଯିବା ଆସିବା କରୁଅଛି, କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହାର ଷ୍ଟେଶନ ସହର ଉପରେ, ତେଣୁ ସେହିସବୁ ଗାଡ଼ିର ଶତ ଶତ ଲୋକ ଷ୍ଟେସନୁ ଆସି ରାଜପଥରେ ଜନତାର ସ୍ରୋତ ସହିତ ମିଶି ଯାଉ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ଯଦି ଲଣ୍ଡନର ପଥର ପ୍ରତିଦିନର ଜନତା କଳ୍ପନା କରିବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଜାତୀୟ ଉତ୍ସବରେ ଲୋକ ସମାଗମ ସ୍ମରଣ କଲେ କିୟତ ପରିମାାଣରେ ପରିଚୟ ପାଇବେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ରାଜପଥର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କିପରି ତାହା ଲଣ୍ଡନକୁ ନ ଆସିଲେ କିଛି ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଦିନେ ଏହି ରାଜପଥ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲି, ଦେଖିଲି ଅବିରାମବାହୀ ଗାଡ଼ି ଓ ଜନତା ସହିତ ଦୋକାନ ଚାଲୁଅଛି, ଘର ଚାଲୁଅଛି, ଯାହାକିଛି ସବୁ ଚାଲୁଅଛି ! ମୁଁ ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ଦେଖି ବିସ୍ମୟସହକାରେ ଭାବିଲି, 'ଯଥାର୍ଥରେ ଏମାନେ ରାଜା ଜାତି' । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଯାହା ଯଥେଷ୍ଟଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ, ଏମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ତାହା ଅକିଞ୍ଚିକର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ । କୁଝଟିକା ନଭେମ୍ବର ମାସରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହରକୁ ଆଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ କରେ । ଏହା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଦୁଇପ୍ରକାର, କୃଷ୍ଣବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ପୀତବର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ଯେଉଁ ସମୟରେ କୃଷ୍ଣବର୍ଣ୍ଣ କୁଜ୍ଝଟିକା ଦୁଇ ପ୍ରହରବେଳେ ଆସି ସହରକୁ ନିବିଡ଼ ଅନ୍ଧକାରରେ ଆଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ କରେ, ସେହି ସମୟରେ ତତ୍‌କ୍ଷଣାତ୍ ଗ୍ୟାସ ଆଲୋକ ସମସ୍ତ ସହରକୁ ଆଲୋକିତ କରେ । ଦିନ ଦୁଇପ୍ରହର ବେଳେ ରାତି ଦୁଇ ପ୍ରହର ପରି ବୋଧହୁଏ । ଏହି କୁଜ୍ଝଟିକା ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ପକ୍ଷରେ ବିଶେଷ ଅନିଷ୍ଟକର ନୁହେଁ, ବିଶେଷତଃ ଏହି କୁଜ୍ଝଟିକା ଯେତେବେଳେ ଉପରେ ଥାଏ (ତଳକୁ ଆସି ଭୂମି ସ୍ପର୍ଶ କରେ ନାହିଁ) ତେତେବେଳେ ରାତ୍ରିର ଅନ୍ଧକାର ପରି ବୋଧହୁଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଲୋକସମାଗମ ଓ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବିରାମ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ କିମ୍ବା କୌଣସି କ୍ଷତି ହୁଏନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପୀତବର୍ଣ୍ଣର କୁଜ୍ଝଟିକା ଭୟାନକ , ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ଏହାକୁ ପିସୁପ (Pea-soup) ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ରନ୍ଧାଡାଲି କହନ୍ତି । ଏହା କଣ୍ଠନଳୀକୁ ସ୍ପର୍ଶକରି ଶ୍ୱାସରୋଧ କରିବାର ଉପକ୍ରମ କରେ, ଏହି କୁଜ୍ଝଟିକାରେ ଗ୍ୟାସ ଆଲୋକ ବୃଥା, ଆଲୋକ ନିକଟରେ ଆଲୋକ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ନାହିଁ, ସମସ୍ତ ରାଜ ପଥର ଗାଡ଼ି ଘୋଡ଼ା ଲୋକ ଗମନାଗମନ ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଏ, ଯେ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଯେଉଁ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଥାନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ସେହି ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ସେହିଠାରେ ରହିବାକୁ ହୁଏ ।



ବିଲାତର ଇଂରେଜ ଓ ଭାରତର ଇଂରେଜ

ପିତା ଏବଂ ବନ୍ଧୁଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ଶୁଣିଥିଲି, ବିଲାତର ଇଂରେଜ ଓ ଭାରତର ଇଂରେଜ ଦିଓଟି ଭିନ୍ନ ଜାତି, ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ଯେ କେହି ବିଲାତର ଇଂରେଜଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ଭାରତର ଇଂରେଜକୁ ଦେଖି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଏମାନଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଅଛି ଏହା ମନେ କରି ପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଜାତି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସ୍ୱାତନ୍ତ୍ର ଏବଂ ବିଶେଷ ବିଶେଷ ଗୁଣ ରହିଅଛି, ସୁତରାଂ ଏକ ଇଂରେଜ ଜାତିକୁ ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦୁଇ

ଇଂରେଜ ଜାତି ବୋଲି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ କଲି, ତେତେବେଳେ ଏହି ଦୁଇ ଜାତି ମଧ୍ୟରେ କିରୂପ ପ୍ରଭେଦ ଅଛି, ତାହା ଆପଣମାନେ ନିମ୍ନଲିଖିତ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନାରୁ ବୁଝିବେ ।

ଏ ଦେଶର ଇଂରେଜଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ବେଶି କିଛି କହିବା ନିଷ୍ପ୍ରୟୋଜକ, କାରଣ ଉଚ୍ଚଠାରୁ ନିମ୍ନସ୍ଥ ରାଜକର୍ମଚାରୀ ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ଡ଼େପୁଟୀବାବୁଙ୍କଠାରୁ କିରାଣୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ' ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କର ଭଦ୍ରତା ବିଶୁଦ୍ଧ ବ୍ୟବହାର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟହ ସହ୍ୟ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ କିଛି ଲେଖିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନେ ମୁଖରେ ଯେତେ ପ୍ରଶଂସା କରନ୍ତୁ ପଛକେ ମନରେ ସାହେବଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ବିରକ୍ତ ନହୋଇ ରହି ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଅନ୍ତପୁର ମହିଳା ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଲୋକ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଏ ଦେଶର ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସକାଶେ କିଛି ଲେଖିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସାଧାରଣ ନିୟମ । ଏଥିରେ ଅନେକ ନିପାତନ ଦୃଷ୍ଟ ହୁଏ । ସାଧାରଣତଃ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ଯେ ବିଲାତର ଇଂରେଜ, ଭାରତରେ ପଦାର୍ପଣ କରିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନିଜ ଦେଶର ଗୁଣ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ନଥାନ୍ତି । ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବିଷୟ, କିଛିଦିନ ପରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟବହାର ଦେଖି ମନରେ ହୁଏ, ଛଅ ହଜାର ମାଇଲ ସମୁଦ୍ରର ଲବଣାକ୍ତ ଜଳରେ ଆସି ମଧ୍ୟ ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଣରାଶି ଅକ୍ଷୁଣ୍ଣ ଥିଲା, ତାହା କିରୂପେ ଲୋପ ପାଇଲା ବିବେଚନା କଲେ ବୁଝିପାରୁଁ ଏହାର କାରଣ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ନିଜେ । ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଯଦି ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଥାନ୍ତା, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯଦି ଇଂରେଜ ନିକଟରେ ସମତୁଲ୍ୟ ଭାବରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କହନ୍ତୁ, ତାହାହେଲେ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ କଦାଚ ନିଜ ଦେଶର ଗୁଣ ହରାନ୍ତେ ନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ସାହେବମାନେ ନିଜ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଗଲେ ପୁଣି ଭଦ୍ର ହୁଅନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଉଚ୍ଚପଦସ୍ଥ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଯେପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ଓ ଯେପରି ଭାଷା ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରନ୍ତି ନିଜ ଦେଶର ନିଜ ଦାସଦାସୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ମଧ୍ୟ ସେପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ସେ ଦେଶର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀଙ୍କର ମଧ୍ୟ ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନଜ୍ଞାନ ଅଛି, ତାହାର ଜ୍ୱଳନ୍ତ ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ଆପଣ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଇବି ।

ଯେଉଁ ସମୟରେ ମୁଁ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଘର ଭଡ଼ା କରି ଦାସ ଦାସୀ ଘେନି ଥିଲି, ସେହି ସମୟରେ ଦିନକର ଘଟଣାରେ ମୁଁ ସେଠାରେ ଦାସ ଦାସୀଙ୍କର ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ଜ୍ଞାନର ପରିଚୟ ବିଶେଷ ରୂପେ ପାଇଅଛି । ଦିନେ ମୋର ପ୍ରଧାନ ଦାସୀ ଆସି କହିଲା–

''ଆଜି ପାଞ୍ଚଜଣ ଦାସଦାସୀ ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଳି ମୋତେ ଜଣାଇଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ସେମାନେ ଚାଲିଯିବେ, ଏଠାରେ କାମ କରିବେ ନାହିଁ ।''

ମୁଁ କହିଲି ''ସେମାନେ କାହିଁକି ଚାଲିଯିବେ ।''

ପ୍ରଧାନ ଦାସୀ– ''ମୁଁ ଜାଣେ ନାହିଁ, ଆପଣ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଡାକି ପଚାରନ୍ତୁ, ମାତ୍ର ସେମାନେ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ମୁଁ ଏକା କଣ କରିବି ? ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଂଗରେ ଚାଲିଯିବି ।''

ମୁଁ ଆଉ ଜଣେ ଦାସୀକୁ ଡାକି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଚାଲିଯିବାର କାରଣ ପଚାରିଲି । ସେ କହିଲା, ''ଏଠାରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସୁଖସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦତା ନାହିଁ , ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଚାଲିଯିବୁ ।''

ମୁଁ– ''ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଖାଇବାପିଇବାର (ବିଲାତର ସମସ୍ତ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଏବଂ ରହିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥାନ ଦେବାକୁ ହୁଏ) କଷ୍ଟ ହେଉଅଛି ।''

ସେ କହିଲା– ''ନା, ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ରହିବ ନାହିଁ, ସେଠାରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନା ?''

ମୁଁ– ''କାହିଁକି ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ରହିବ ନାହିଁ ?''

ସେ କହିଲା–''ତୁମର ଯେଉଁ ଭାରତର ଚାକର ଜଣେ ଅଛି, ତାହାର ଯେତେବେଳେ କିଛି ଦରକାର ହୁଏ, ସେ ଭଦ୍ରଭାବରେ ମାଗେନାହିଁ, ହୁକୁମ କରେ (He never asks for any thing, but always demands for it) ଏଥିରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନର ହାନି ହୁଏ, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏପରି ସ୍ଥାନରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରିବୁଁ ନାହିଁ ।'' ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନରେ ବୁଝିଲି ଯେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଚାକରଟି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କୌଣସି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ କହିଲାବେଳେ ''Please do this'' (ଅନୁଗ୍ରହ ପୂର୍ବକ ଏହାକର) ନ କହି କେବଳ ''do this''(ଏହା କର) ବୋଲି କହିଥିଲା । ଏଭଳି ସମ୍ବୋଧନ ଦସ୍ତୁରବିରୁଦ୍ଧ ଅଟେ ।

ମୁଁ ଦାସୀ ମୁଖରୁ ଏପରି କଥା ଶୁଣି ଭାବିଲି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଦାସଦାସୀଙ୍କର ବା ମଧ୍ୟବିତ୍ତ ଲୋକଙ୍କ କଥା ଦୂରେ ଥାଉ, ଉଚ୍ଚ-ପଦସ୍ଥ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କର ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ଦାସୀ ପରି ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ଥାନ୍ତା, ତେବେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶ ଏପରି ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର ପ୍ରପୀଡ଼ିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତା ନାହିଁ ।

ସେଠାର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନଙ୍କ କଥା କାହିଁକି ମୋ ମନରେ ଏପରି ଭାବରେ ମୁଦ୍ରିତ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା, ତାହା ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ଅବସ୍ଥାର ସବୁ କଥା ଶୁଣିଲେ ପାଠକ ପାଠିକାମାନେ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । ବିଲାତ ଶୀତ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଦେଶ, ସୁତରାଂ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ରାତ୍ରି ଯାପନ ପାଇଁ ଘର ଆବଶ୍ୟକ , ତାହା ସମସ୍ତେ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । ତଥାପି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଭିକାରୀ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ସେମାନେ ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟ, ଭିକାରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ କୁଡ଼ିଆଘର ଅଛି, କି ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ରହି ସେମାନେ ଦିନ କଟାନ୍ତି, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଦେଶର ମୁନିବର ଗୃହ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଦାସଦାସୀଙ୍କର ରହିବାର ସ୍ଥାନ ନାହିଁ । ତହିଁରେ ପୁଣି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶ ପରି ଚାକରମାନେ ନିଜ ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ଏକ ସ୍ଥାନରୁ ଯାଇ ଅନ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାନରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରି ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନୂଆ ମୁନିବ ଘରେ ଚାକିରି କରିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ପୁରୁଣା ମୁନିବର ଚିଠି ଦେଖାଇବାକୁ ହେବ, ନଚେତ୍ କାମ ପାଇବେ ନାହିଁ । ଏତଦ୍‌ବ୍ୟତୀତ ବିଲାତରେ ଅନେକ କୋମ୍ପାନୀ ଅଛି, ସେମାନେ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦାସଦାସୀ ଯୋଗାନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଦାସଦାସୀ କିପରି ଲୋକ ତାହା ବୁଝି ଚାକିରିସ୍ଥାନକୁ ପଠାନ୍ତି । ସୁତରାଂ ମୋର ଚାକରମାନେ ଚାଲିଯିବା



ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ପ୍ରଥମ ଅଧକ୍ଷା
ସୁଧାଂଶୁବାଳା ହାଜ୍‌ରା (ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସଙ୍କ ଭଗ୍ନୀ)

ସମୟରେ ଭଲରୂପେ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ମୁଁ କୋମ୍ପାନୀକୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଭଲ ମନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ନଦେଲେ ସେମାନେ ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ଚାକିରି ପାଇବେ ନାହିଁ । କେବଳ ଏତିକି ନୁହେ ବିଲାତରେ ନିୟମ ଅଛି, ଚାକର ନିଜ ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ଚାକିରି ଛାଡ଼ିଲେ ମୁନିବର ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହ ଆଗରୁ ଜଣାଇବ ଏବଂ ମୁନିବ ଚକରକୁ ଛଡ଼ାଇବାର ହେଲେ ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହ ଆଗରୁ ଜଣାଇବେ, ନଚେତ୍ ଚାକର ମୁନିବଙ୍କୁ କିମ୍ବା ମୁନିବ ଚାକରକୁ ଚାକରର ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହର ବେତନ ଟଙ୍କା ଦେବାକୁ ହେବ । ଏହି କାରଣରୁ ମୋର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହକୁ ବେତନ ଟ୭୫/- ଦେଇ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଆପଣମାନେ ବୁଝି ପାରୁ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ଯେ ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନଙ୍କର ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନଜ୍ଞାନ ଏତେ ଅଧିକ, ସେ ଦେଶରେ କେହି ଅଭଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବେ ନାହିଁ ।

ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଡେପୁଟିବାବୁ, କିରାଣୀ ବାବୁଙ୍କର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ଜୀବନଧାରଣ କରିବା ଯେପରି ସହଜ ସେ ଦେଶରେ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସେପରି ନୁହେଁ ମୁଁ ପୂର୍ବେ କହିଅଛି, ଏଠାର ଇଂରେଜ ଓ ସେଠାର ଇଂରେଜ ଦୁଇ ଜାତି, ଏଠାର ଇଂରେଜ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଗଲେ ସେଠାର ଇଂରେଜ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶିବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ସେଠାର ଇଂରେଜଙ୍କ ଭଦ୍ରବ୍ୟବହାର ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥତ୍ୟାଗ, ସହାନୁଭୂତି ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଗୁଣ ମୋର ମନକୁ ବିଶେଷଭାବରେ ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ କରିଅଛି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ଭଦ୍ର-ବ୍ୟବହାର ପାଇ ନ ଥିଲେ ସୁଦୂର ପ୍ରବାସରେ ଏତେଦିନ ରହି ପାରି ନ ଥାନ୍ତେ । ସେମାନେ ପର ପାଇଁ କିପରି ଚିନ୍ତା କରନ୍ତି, ଗୋଟିଏ କଥାରୁ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । କେମ୍ବ୍ରିଜରେ ପଢୁଥିବା ସମୟରେ ମୁଁ ଜଣେ ଭଦ୍ର ଇଂରେଜ ପରିବାର ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଥିଲି, ଦିନେ ଦେଖିଲି, (ସେହି ପରିବାରରେ) ମାଉସୀ ଝିଆରୀ ଦୁଇଜଣ ଦୁଇ ଖଣ୍ଡ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଅଛନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ସେଠାକୁ ଯିବାରେ ମୋତେ କହିଲେ, (Tristan & Acuntia) ନାମକ ଦ୍ୱୀପକୁ ବର୍ଷରେ ଥରେ ଜାହାଜ ଯାଏ, ସୁତରାଂ ସେହି ଦ୍ୱୀପବାସୀମାନେ ବର୍ଷରେ ଥରେ ବନ୍ଧୁବର୍ଗଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ଚିଠି ପାନ୍ତି । ଏହି ଜାହାଜ ଛଡ଼ା ସେଠାକୁ ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଉପାୟରେ ଚିଠି ଯିବାର ବାଟ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଜାହାଜ ସେଠାରେ ଯେଉଁଦିନ ପହଞ୍ଚେ, ଦ୍ୱୀପବାସୀମାନେ ଉତ୍ସବ ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହୃଦୟରେ ପୋଷ୍ଟଫିସ୍‌କୁ ଦୌଡ଼ି ଆସନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଚିଠି ପାନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଖୁସି ହୁଅନ୍ତି, ମାତ୍ର ଏପରି ଅନେକ ଲୋକ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ କେହି ପ୍ରବାସରେ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ସେମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଚିଠି ପାଇବେ; ଏହିପରି ଦୁଇଜଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦୁଇଖଣ୍ଡ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଅଛୁଁ । ଏହି ଚିଠି ଲେଖି ସାରି ତାହା ଉପରେ ଲେଖିଲେ ଯାର କୌଣସି ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ନାହିଁ, ସେ ଏହି ଚିଠି ନେବେ'' । ଚିଠି ଭିତରେ ଲେଖିଥିଲେ ''ତୁମ୍ଭେମାନେ ମନେ କରିବ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର କେହି ନାହିଁ, ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ପରି କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ଦ୍ୱୀପରେ ଈଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରିବାକୁ ଲୋକ ଅଛନ୍ତି ।'' ଏହି ପତ୍ରରୁ ଇଂରେଜ ଜାତିର ଉଚ୍ଚମନର ପରିଚୟ ପାଇ ଭାବିଲା, ଯଦି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ

ଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ପ୍ରତିବାସୀ ପ୍ରତି ଏପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରୁଥାନ୍ତେ ତାହା ହେଲେ କେତେ ମହତ୍ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସାଧିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ଆପଣା ଆପଣା ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ଘେନି ଏତେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଯେ ଅନ୍ୟଦେଶ କଥା ଦୂରେ ଥାଉ ଆପଣା ସମାଜ ବା ଦେଶ ପାଇଁ କିଛି କରିବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ବରଂ ଅନ୍ୟ କେହି କିଛି କରୁଥିବାର ଦେଖିଲେ ତାହା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ନାନା ପ୍ରକାର ଅପ୍ରିୟ କଥା କହିବାକୁ କୁଣ୍ଠିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଦେଶର ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ନ ଜାଣି ସୁଦ୍ଧା କେବଳ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଦୁଃଖ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ଅଯାଚିତଭାବରେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେହି ଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶକୁ ଆସି ଯେପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି, ତାହାଦ୍ୱାରା ସେ ଦେଶର ଓ ଏ ଦେଶର ଇଂରେଜ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କେତେଦୂର ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ଅଛି, ତାହା ସହଜରେ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । ସେ ଦେଶର ଲୋକମାନେ ଚାକରମାନଙ୍କୁ କିପରି ଭଲ ପାନ୍ତି, ତାହାର ମଧ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ଏଠାରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିବି । ଥରେ ମୁଁ ଜଣେ ଧନୀ ଲର୍ଡଙ୍କ ଭଉଣୀ ଘରେ ଅତିଥି ହୋଇଥିଲି , ଦିନେ ସେ ମୋତେ କହିଲେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଆଜି ଦିନକ ପାଇଁ ଏ ଘର ଛାଡି ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଯାଉଅଛୁଁ, କାରଣ ମୋତେ ଜଣେ ଦାସୀର ଆଜି ବିବାହ, ତାହାର ଘର ନାହିଁ, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ଆଜିକପାଇଁ ଏ ଘର ଛାଡି ଦେଇଅଛି, ସେ ଆଜି ଏଠାରେ ତାହାର ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବମାନଙ୍କୁ ଘେନି ଅମୋଦପ୍ରମୋଦ କରିବ । ମୁଁ ଏହି କଥା ଶୁଣି ଚମତ୍କୃତ ହେଲି । ଏଥିରୁ ଆପଣମାନେ ସହଜରେ ସେ ଦେଶର ଇଂରେଜଙ୍କ ଉଚ୍ଚମନର ପରିଚୟ ପାଇବେ ।

ବିଲାତରେ ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ଚଉଦ ମାସ ଥିଲି, ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଧନୀ, ଦରିଦ୍ର, ଭଦ୍ର, ଅଭଦ୍ର, ସେ ଦେଶବାସୀ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ଏତେ ଭଲ ବ୍ୟବହାର ପାଇଅଛି ଯେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ନେହ ନ କରି ରହି ପାରିନାହିଁ । ଶୀତକାଳରେ ଯେଉଁ ସମୟରେ ଦିନବେଳେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ନାହିଁ, ବାହାର ଅନ୍ଧକାର, ମନ ସ୍ୱଦେଶ ପାଇଁ ଅସ୍ଥିର ହୁଏ, ସେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁଠାକୁ ଯାଇଅଛି ସେଠାରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ପାଇ ମନକୁ ସୁସ୍ଥିର କରି ପାରିଅଛି ।



ବିଲାତପ୍ରବାସ

ଉଇଙ୍କଓୟାର୍ଥ ହଲ (Winkworth Hall)

ଏହି ଉଇଙ୍କଓୟାର୍ଥ ହଲ୍ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ଉତ୍ତରରେ କିଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ (Kilburn) ନାମକ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଅବସ୍ଥିତ । ଏହି ସ୍ଥାନ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସାମୟିକ ଅବସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇଁ India office ଦ୍ୱାରା (ଇଣ୍ଡିଆ ଅଫିସ) ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଥିଲା । ପୂର୍ବେ କହିଅଛି, ଏହି ଗୃହଟି ଚାରିମହଲା, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଚାରିମହଲାପରି ନୁହେଁ, ଏହାର ଛାତ ଚାଳଘର ପରି ଗଡ଼ାଣିଆ, ଛାତ କାଠ ବା ଟିଣରେ ତିଆରି । (ଗଡ଼ାଣିଆ ଛାତ କରିବାର କାରଣ ଏହି ଯେ ବରଫ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଛାତ ଉପରେ ଜମା ନ ହୋଇ ଗଡ଼ିଯିବ ।) ଏହି ହଲର (ମେସ୍) ତଳ ମହଲାରେ ଖାଇବା ଘର, ରୋଷେଇ ଘର ଏବଂ ଦର୍ଶକମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ବସିବାଘର ଅଛି । ଖାଇବା ଘରେ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ମେଜ ଚଉକି ଅଛି, ତାହା ଅତି ସାମାନ୍ୟ, ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଯେପରି ଟେବୁଲ ଚଉକି ଥାଏ ସେହିପରି । ଦ୍ୱିତଳକୁ ଉଠିବା ସିଢ଼ି ଏତେ ସଙ୍କୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଯେ ସେ ସିଢ଼ିରେ ଏକାବେଳେ ଦୁଇ ଜଣରୁ ବେଶି ଯାଇ ପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ସିଢ଼ି ଉପରକୁ ଉଠିଲେ ଦେଖିବ, ଛାତର ଦୁଇ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଶ୍ରେଣୀବଦ୍ଧ କୋଠରୀ, କୋଠାରୀଗୁଡିକର ଆୟତନ 10 × 8 ଫୁଟ' । ଆସନ୍ତୁ,ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କୁ ଥରେ ସେହି ଘର ଦେଖାଇ ଆଣିବି । ଘର ଭିତରେ ଏକପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ତାରର ଖଟ, ତାହା ଏତେ କମ ଓସାର ଯେ କଡ଼ ଲେଉଟାଇବାକୁ ଗଲେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ପଡିଯିବ । ସେହି ଖଟରେ ବିଛଣା ଥାଏ । ଖଟ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ବହିରଖିବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ କାଠର ଆଲମାରି (Shelf), ପଢ଼ିବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ମେଜ (ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ କୁରୁମ କାଠ ଯେପରି ଶସ୍ତା ଓ ହାଲୁକା ସେହିପରି ଶସ୍ତା ଓ ହାଲୁକା କାଠରେ ମେଜ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ତିଆରି ।), ମେଜ ପାଖରେ ବସି ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଚଉକି ଏବଂ ଦଉଡ଼ି ବୁଣା ଗୋଟିଏ ଆରାମ ଚଉକି (ଆରାମ ଚଉକିଟି ଏପରି ଯେ ଭାରି ଲୋକ ଜଣେ ଜଣେ ବସିଲେ ଭାଙ୍ଗିପଡ଼ିବ, ସରଳା ତହିଁ ରେଢ଼ି ବସିବାକୁ ସାହସ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।), ଲୁଗା ରଖିବାକୁ ସାନ ଆଲମାରୀ ଅଛି, ଏହା ଇଂରେଜ ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଲୁଗା ରଖିବାର ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ, କାରଣ ସେମାନେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁଟରେ ଏକବର୍ଷ କଟାଇ ପାରନ୍ତି, କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେଉଁ ଭାରତୀୟ ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଲୁଗା ବଦଳିବା ଅଭ୍ୟାସ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଲୁଗାଯାକ ଏହି ସାନ ଆଲମାରୀରେ ସମ୍ଭାଇବା ଅସମ୍ଭବ । ତଦ୍‌ଭିନ୍ନ ଲୁଗାରଖିବାପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅଲଗୁଣୀ ଅଛି, ମୁହଁ ଧୋଇବା ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ମେଜ ଏବଂ କାନ୍ଥରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆରସି ଅଛି । ଏହିସବୁ ଘରର ସରଞ୍ଜାମ ।

ବିଲାତର ଧନୀ ଗୃହର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀମାନଙ୍କ ଘର ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଘରର ସରଞ୍ଜାମ ଏହା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ସୁନ୍ଦର ଓ ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ୍ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏପରି ସୁସଜ୍ଜିତ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇ ମନେ ମନେ ଭାରତ ସରକାରଙ୍କୁ କେତେ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଲୁ । ଏଡ଼େ ସାନ ଘର, ତହିଁରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ଖିଡ଼ିକି, ଏହା ପୁଣି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଖିଡ଼ିକି ପରି ନୁହେଁ, ସବୁ ଫିଟି ପାରେ ନାହିଁ, ରେଳଗାଡ଼ିର କାଚ ଖିଡ଼ିକି ପରି, ଉପରକୁ ଉଠାଇଲେ ତଳକୁ ଅଧହାତେ ମେଲା ହୁଏ, ତଳକୁ ଖସାଇ ଦେଲେ ଉପରୁ ଅଧହାତେ ମେଲା ହୁଏ, ଘରର ଦୂଷିତ ବାୟୁ ଦୂର କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଏତିକି ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ! ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଭାରତରେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଉନ୍ମୁକ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଥାଇଁ ଏଠାକୁ ଆସି ମନେ ହେଉଅଛି ଯେ ନିଶ୍ୱାସ ରୁଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଯିବ । ଥଣ୍ଡା ଯୋଗୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ କୁଅର ଖିଡ଼ିକି ବନ୍ଦକରିବାକୁ ହୁଏ, ସେତେବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ କାରାଗାରରେ ଅଛୁ ବୋଲି ମନେହୁଏ । ପରେ ବୁଝିଲି, ଏହି ହଲକୁ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛଳ ଅବସ୍ଥାର ଝିଅମାନେ ଆସନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କୁ କାମ କରି ଖାଇବାକୁ ହେବ, କେବଳ ସେହିମାନେ ଆସନ୍ତି । ସ୍ଥୂଳ କଥା, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସେ ଘର ପସନ୍ଦ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ ଏବଂ ଏପରି ଘରେ କିପରି ପ୍ରବାସର ଦିନଗୁଡ଼ିକ କଟାଇବୁ ଏହା ଭାବି କିଛି ସ୍ଥିର କରିପାରିଲୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ତତ୍‌ପରେ ଏଠାର ଖାଇବାର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଅତି ଜଘନ୍ୟ, ଏପରି ଖାଇବା ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାଜେ, ସବୁ ଖାଦ୍ୟ କେବଳ ଜଳରେ ସିଦ୍ଧ, ତହିଁରେ ତେଲ, ଲୁଣ, ମସଲା କିଛି ନାହିଁ ! ୧୮ ତାରିଖ ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ସକାଳ ଓଳି ଯେତେବେଳେ ଖାଇବା ଘରକୁ ଗଲୁ, ଦେଖିଲୁ ଯେ ମେଜ ଉପରେ ନାନାପ୍ରକାର ଖାଦ୍ୟ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଅଛି, ମନେକଲୁଁ ଏଥି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଖାଇବା ଭଳି କିଛି ଥିବ; କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ମେଜ ପାଖରେ ବସିଲୁ, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆହାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କିଛି ପାଇଲୁ ନାହିଁ । ଦେଖିଲୁ, ଦୁଇଦିନର ଥଣ୍ଡା ଗୋରୁ ଓ ଶୂକର ମାଂସ ସିଝା, ତିନି ଚାରିଦିନର ପଚାମାଛର ଚଟଣୀ, ପନିର, ମଖନ, ଜେଲି ରୁଟି, ଚା, କଫି, ଏଥିରୁ କଣ ଖାଇବୁ ସ୍ଥିର କରି ପାରିଲୁ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ରାତିରୁ ଅନାହାରରେ ଅଛୁ, ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ କ୍ଷୁଧା ବୋଧ କରୁଥିଲୁ, ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଏକ ପିଆଲା ଚା, ସାମାନ୍ୟ କିଛି ରୁଟି ଓ ମଖନ ଖାଇଲୁ । ଏହି ସମୟର ଆହାରକୁ ଏମାନେ ପ୍ରାତଃଭୋଜନ କହନ୍ତି । ଦିନ ଗୋଟାଏବେଳେ ପୁଣି ଖାଇବା ସମୟ, ସକାଳବେଳପରି ସବୁ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ମେଜରେ ସଜ୍ଜିତ । ସକାଳବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ତିନିଜଣ ଭାରତ ମହିଳା ପୂର୍ବୋକ୍ତ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଖାଇ ପାରିନ ଥିଲୁ ବୋଲି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଦିଓଟି ଭାତ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଟିକିଏ ଗୁଡ଼ରଖା ହୋଇଅଛି । ସେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ଭାତ ରାନ୍ଧି, ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ଭାତ ରାନ୍ଧି ପେଜ ନ ଗାଳି ଥଣ୍ଡା ପାଣିରେ ପକାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ତତ୍‌ପରେ ତାହାକୁ ଛାଣି ନିଅନ୍ତି । ଏ ଭାତ ଯେ ରସନାର କିପରି ତୃପ୍ତିକର, ତାହା ପାଠକ ପାଠିକା ବୁଝିପାରିବେ । ମୁଁ ଏ ସବୁ କିଛି ଖାଇ ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ, ସରଳା ଦିଓଟି ଭାତ ଓ ଗୁଡ଼ ଟିକିଏ ଖାଇଲେ, ମୁଁ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ରୁଟି ମଖନ ଖାଇ ଉଠିଲି । ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ହଲଟି ସ୍ଥାପିତ, ତାହାର ନିକଟବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କୌଣସି ସ୍ଥାନରେ ହୋଟେଲ

(ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କ ଖାଇବାର ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ) ନାହିଁ, ଥିଲେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସେଠାରେ ଖାଇ ଆସନ୍ତୁ ।

ଉପରଓଳି ଚାରିଟା ବେଳେ ଚା, ରୁଟି , ମଖନ ଓ କେକର (ପିଠା) ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ପେଟ ପୂରାଇ ଖାଇଲୁ । ରାତ୍ର ସାତଟା ସମୟରେ ରାତ୍ରଭୋଜନ, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଆସିଛୁ ବୋଲି ଏ ସମୟରେ କୌଣସି ଅଖାଦ୍ୟ ନ ଦେଇ ମେଷ ମାଂସ ସିଝା, ଆଳୁ ଓ ବନ୍ଧାକୋବି ସିଝା ଏବଂ ଦୁଧର ଘନ ପାୟସ (Pudding) ଦେଲେ । ଯାହାହେଉ କଷ୍ଟରେ କିଛି ଖାଇଲୁ, ଭାବିଲୁଁ ଏପରି ଖାଦ୍ୟଖାଇ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ବେଶିଦିନ ବଞ୍ଚିବୁ ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲି, ''ତୁମ୍ଭ ଶରୀରରେ ଯେତେ ଚର୍ବିଅଛି (ସେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥୂଳକାୟ), ତହିଁରେ ତୁମ୍ଭେ ନ ଖାଇ ମାସେ ଚଳାଇ ନେଇ ପାରିବ, ମୋ ଦେହରେ କିଛି ନାହିଁ, ମୋର ଖାଇବାର ଅନ୍ୟ ନିଜ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଶୀଘ୍ର ନକଲେ ମୁଁ ମରିଯିବି ।'' ଏହା କହି ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମିସ୍ କେଶିଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଗଲୁ । ମିସ୍ କେଶ ପ୍ରବୀଣା ସ୍ଥୂଳକାୟା, ମିଷ୍ଟଭାଷିଣୀ, ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସାନ୍ତ ମା ବୁଢ଼ୀପରି । ସେ କଥାରେ ଏପରି ମିଷ୍ଟଭାଷିଣୀ ଯେ ଦେଖିଲେ ମନରେ ହୁଏ ଯେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସୁଖ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦତା ପାଇଁ ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି, ପ୍ରାୟ ସବୁବେଳେ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ କହନ୍ତି, ''ଏହି ଯେ ତିନିଜଣ ଭାରତରୁ ଆସିଅଛନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ କଣ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେବି, କଣ କଲେ ଏମାନେ ଘର ପରି ମନେ କରିବେ, ତୁମ୍ଭେମାନେ କହି ପାରିବ ? ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରୁ କିଛି ବୁଝିଛ ?'' ମାତ୍ର ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭଲରୂପେ ବୁଝାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲୁ ଯେ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳରେ କିଛି ଡିମ୍ବ ଏବଂ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନରେ ମାଛ ଭାତ ଛଡ଼ା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ କିଛି ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ, ଅଥଚ ଏତେ କହିବା ପରେ ଟେବୁଲ ପାଖକୁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖୁଁ ଯେ ପୂର୍ବବତ୍ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସେହି ଅଣ୍ଡା ଶୂକର ଓ ଗୋରୁ ମାଂସ ସମଭାବରେ ବିରାଜିତ । ତାହା ପୁଣି ଏଡ଼େ ପତଳା କରି କାଟି ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତି ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର କେଉଟୁଣୀମାନେ ମାଛ କାଟିବାରେ ଏହାଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ହାରିଯିବେ । ମୁଁ ମିସ୍ କେଶଙ୍କୁ କହିଲି, ''ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ କଷ୍ଟ ଦେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରୁନାହିଁ ଅନୁଗ୍ରହ କରି ଯଦି ଅନୁମତି ଦିଅ ମୁଁ ଓ ସରଳା ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କପାଇଁ କିଛି ରାନ୍ଧନ୍ତୁ ।'' ସେ ଶୁଣି କହିଲେ, ''ଅତି ଉତ୍ତମ, କିନ୍ତୁ ମୋର ଗେଷେଇ ଘରେ ସବୁବେଳେ କାମ ଲାଗି ରହିଛି, ତୁମ୍ଭେ ଯଦି ରାତ୍ର ୮ଟା ପରେ ରାନ୍ଧି ସେ ରନ୍ଧନ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ ତା ପରଦିନ ଖାଇପାର; ତେବେ ମୋର କୌଣସି ଆପତ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । (ରାତ୍ର ୭ ଟା ସମୟରେ ରାତ୍ର ଭୋଜନ ହୁଏ, ସୁତରାଂ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ୮ଟା ପରେ ରାନ୍ଧି ତାହା ସେହିଦିନ ଖାଇ ପାରିବୁ ନାହିଁ) ମୁଁ ଏହି କଥାରେ ରାଜି ହୋଇ ସପ୍ତାହରେ ତିନିଦିନ ରାନ୍ଧିବାର ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କଲି । ଏହି ରୂପେ ଅଖାଦ୍ୟ ନଖାଇ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦିନ କଟାଇଲୁଁ ।

ଇଣ୍ଡିଆ ଅଫିସ (ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ) କଣ ବୁଝି ଯେ ଏଠାରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ରହିବାର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କଲେ ବୁଝି ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ, ଭାରତ ସରକାର (ଭାରତର ବଡ଼ଲାଟ) ଦୁଇଜଣ ଛାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ (ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ସରଳା ଓ ଫାଇଜୀଙ୍କୁ) ଶିକ୍ଷା ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଶିଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡକୁ ପଠାଇଛନ୍ତି କିନ୍ତୁ ଭାରତ ଅଫିସ ଜାଣେନାହିଁ ଏହି ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନେ କେଉଁଠାରେ, କେତେଦିନ ପାଇଁ କି ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରିବାକୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି!! ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଫାଇଜୀ ଜୀବୀ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଯେତେବେଳେ ଭାରତ ଅଫିସକୁ ବୃତ୍ତି ମାଗି ପଠାଇଲେ ସେଠାରୁ ଉତ୍ତର ଆସିଲା, "ଭାରତର ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଲେଖା ହୋଇଅଛି, ଉତ୍ତର ଆସିଲେ ବୃତ୍ତି ପାଇବ ଉତ୍ତର ନ ଆସିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଅଛ ସେହିଠାରେ ରହିବ।" ମୁଁ ବୁଝିଲି ସରକାରଙ୍କ ବୃତ୍ତି ଘେନି ଲଣ୍ଡନକୁ ଆସିବା ସୁଖକର ନୁହେଁ। ମନେ କରିଥିଲି, ଏମାନେ (ସରଳା ଓ ଫାଇଜୀ ବୀବୀ)ଭଲ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ରହିବେ, ଭଲ କଲେଜରେ ପଢ଼ିବେ, ମାତ୍ର ତାହା ଭୁଲ କାରଣ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଡ଼ିରେକ୍ଟର ଶିକ୍ଷା ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ନିମନ୍ତେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର କେଉଁ କଲେଜ ଭଲ ତାହା ଜାଣି ନଥିଲେ। ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏକଥା ଜଣା ନଥିବାରୁ ସେ ଷ୍ଟେଟ ସେକ୍ରେଟାରୀ ମର୍ଲି ସାହେବଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଭାର ଅର୍ପଣ କରିଥିଲେ। ଭାରତ ଅଫିସ୍ ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ କିଛି ନ ବୁଝି ଛାତ୍ରୀ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମେରିଆ ଗ୍ରେ (Meria Gray) କଲେଜକୁ ପଠାଇ ଦେଲେ। ଭାରତର ଏହି ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱାବଧାନର ଭାର ଏଠାର ପୋଲିଟିକେଲ ଏଣ୍ଟଟ ସାର୍ କର୍ଜନ ଏୟାଲିଙ୍କ (Political Agent) Sir Cuzzon Wylli) ଉପରେ ନ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଲା। ଏ ଅତି ଭଦ୍ର ଏବଂ ମୋର ବନ୍ଧୁ , ମୁଁ ଏହାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଅନେକ ଥର ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରିତ ହୋଇଅଛି। ଏହାଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲେଡ଼ି ଓୟାଲ ଅତି ଉତ୍ତମ ଲୋକ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଏହି ହଲ୍‌ର ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି କହିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ। ଏଠାରେ ପଚିଶଟି ଭଦ୍ର ଅଭଦ୍ର ସୁଶ୍ରୀ କୁଶ୍ରୀ, ବିଦ୍ୱାନ ମୂର୍ଖ ବାଳିକା ଅଛନ୍ତି। ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ପୂର୍ବେ କେହି ଭାରତ ମହିଳା ଦେଖି ନାହାନ୍ତି। ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବିଷୟ ଏମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଉପାଧିଧାରଣା ହୋଇ ଭାରତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଅତି ଅଜ୍ଞ। ମୁଁ ଦେଖିଲି, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଭାରତରେ ବସି, ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ରାଜନୀତି, ଶାସନ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ, ସ୍କୁଲ କଲେଜ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯାହା ଜାଣୁ, ଏମାନେ ଭାରତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ତାହାର ଶତାଂଶରୁ ଏକାଂଶ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ କହିଲେ ଅତ୍ୟୁକ୍ତି ହେବ ନାହିଁ। ପ୍ରଥମେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆଳାପ କଲୁ, ବୁଝିଲୁଁ ଭାରତର ନର ନାରୀ ଅସଭ୍ୟ ଜନ୍ତୁ ବିଶେଷ ବୋଲି ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଧାରଣା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ କୌତୁହଳ ନେତ୍ରରେ ଚାହିଁ ଦେଖନ୍ତି। ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ବାର୍ତ୍ତା ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଶେଷରେ ଏମାନେ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେ ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କୌଣସି ଅଂଶରେ ହୀନ ନୋହୁଁ ଏବଂ ଏକଥା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ କୁଣ୍ଠିତ ହେଲେନାହିଁ। ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦର୍ପର ସହିତ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଦେଶର ପୁରାତନ ଗୌରବର କଥା, ଶିକ୍ଷାର କଥା କହେଁ, ସେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ପିତାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ଅବି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଉପଦେଶ ମନରେ ପଡେ । ପିତା ମୋତେ ଲେଖିଥିଲେ,

“ମୋର ପ୍ରିୟ କନ୍ୟା ତୁମ୍ଭେ ସବୁବେଳେ ମାତୃଭୂମି ପ୍ରତି କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ସ୍ମରଣ କରିବ । ବନ୍ଧୁଭାବରେ କ୍ରୀଡ଼ା ସହଚରୀ ବା ସହପାଠିକାରୂପେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶିବ, ତୁମ୍ଭର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଯେପରି ସେଠାର ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଭାବ ଜାଗ୍ରତ କରାଏ । ସ୍ନେହ, ଦୟା, ସହିଷ୍ଣୁତା ପବିତ୍ରତା ଆତିଥେୟତା ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଭାରତ ରମଣୀର ପ୍ରଧାନ ଭୂଷଣ, ସେହି ସମସ୍ତ ଗୁଣ ଯେପରି ଇଂରେଜ ମହିଳାମାନେ ତୁମ୍ଭଠାରୁ ଶିଖି ପାରନ୍ତି । ଧର୍ମ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଧାନ ଭୂଷଣ । ଧର୍ମସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ଏବଂ ସାମାଜିକ କୁସଂସ୍କାରରୂପ ଦୁର୍ଗ ପ୍ରାଚୀରରେ ଭାରତ ମହିଳା ଏପରି ଭାବରେ ଆପଣାକୁ ଆବଦ୍ଧ କରି ରଖିଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଧର୍ମ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣରୂପେ ସେ ପ୍ରାଚୀର ଭେଦ କରିପାରୁନାହିଁ । ଏଥିରୁ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାର ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ଓ ସାମାଜିକ ବଳ କେତେ ଅଧିକ, ତାହା ବୁଝିପାରିବ । ତୁମ୍ଭର ଜୀବନ ଯେପରି ସେଠାରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାର ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଦର୍ଶ ଛବି ଦେଖାଇ ପାରେ । ମୁଁ ମୋର ଏହି ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବୟସରେ କିଛି ଆଶା କରେ ନାହିଁ, କେବଳ ହୃଦୟର ନିଭୃତ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଏତିକି ଆଶା ରଖିଛି, ତାହା ଏହି ଯେ (ଏହା ଅନ୍ୟ ନିକଟରେ ଅଳୀକ ବୋଧ ହୋଇପାରେ, ମାତ୍ର ତୁମ୍ଭେ ତାହା ଜାଣ) ତୁମ୍ଭର ଜୀବନ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଉଚ୍ଚସ୍ଥାନ ଦେଉ । ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ମନର ଧାରଣା ଯେ ଏ ଦେଶର ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଦାସୀ ପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମାନ ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଦେଖନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଆଶା କରେ, ତୁମ୍ଭେ ଏ ସବୁ ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତି ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମନରୁ ଦୂର କରିବ ।”

ମୁଁ ସର୍ବଦା ପିତାଙ୍କ ମଧୁର ଉପଦେଶ ସ୍ମରଣ ରଖି ଛାତ୍ରୀବୃନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ସହିତ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କହେ । କ୍ରମେ ଏହି ସବୁ ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କୁମାରୀ ମେରୀ ମାର୍ଶଲଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସରଳାଙ୍କର ଓ ମୋର ବିଶେଷ ବନ୍ଧୁତ୍ୱ ଜନ୍ମିଲା । ସେ ଏମ୍. ଏ. ପାସ କରି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କପରି ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଶିଖୁଥିଲେ, ସେ ସର୍ବଦା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ସହାନୁଭୂତି ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି ଓ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ନିଅନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଅମାୟିକ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ସରଳା ଓ ମୁଁ ମୋହିତ ହୋଇଗଲୁ । ଏହି ହଲରେ କୁମାରୀ ମାର୍ଶଲ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରକୃତ ବନ୍ଧୁଥିଲେ ।

ମୋର ଶାରୀରିକ ଅସୁସ୍ଥତାପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦାସୀ ରଖିଲି, ସେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୁଢ଼ୀ ମେମ୍ । ପାଠକ ପାଠିକା ! ମନେ କହିବେ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଯେପରି ଥାନ୍ତି, ଏଠାରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସେହିପରି ଥାନ୍ତି । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଅନେକେ ଏଠାର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ଏଠାର ଇଂରେଜ ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟବହାର ଦେଖି ମନେ ହୁଏ, ଏ ଶ୍ରେଣୀଠାରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ନୀଚ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ଏଠାର ଚାକର ଚାକରାଣୀ ମାନେ ବେଶ ଭଦ୍ରତା ଜାଣନ୍ତି । ମୋର ବୁଢ଼ୀ ମେମ ଦାସୀର ବୟସ ଷାଠିଏ ବର୍ଷ ହେବ, ଭଲ କରି ଶୁଣିପାରେ ନାହିଁ, ସବୁବେଳେ ଗୋଡ଼ରେ ଜୋତା ମୋଜା ଓ ସର୍ବାଙ୍ଗରେ ମେମ୍

ପୋଷାକ । ଏହାକୁ ଘେନି ସରଳା ଓ ମୁଁ ସମୟ ସମୟରେ କୌତୁକ କରୁ । ଏହି ମେମ୍ ଦାସୀକୁ ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହରେ ଟ୧୬ଙ୍କା ଲେଖାଏଁ ବେତନ ଦେବାକୁ ହୁଏ, କିନ୍ତୁ ବେତନର ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ କିଛି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରେ ନାହିଁ । ବିଲାତରେ ଦାସ ଦାସୀଙ୍କ ବେତନ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ କିରାନୀ ଓ ଡେପୁଟିବାବୁଙ୍କ ବେତନ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ । ମୋର ମେମ୍ ଦାସୀ ବୁଢ଼ୀ ବୋଲି ତାକୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ବେତନ ଦେବାକୁ ହୁଏ । ରାତିରେ ବିଛଣାରେ ଶୋଇ ଏହି ବୁଢ଼ୀ ନିକଟରେ ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଭାରତର ଐଶ୍ୱର୍ଯ୍ୟ କଥା କହେଁ, ବୁଢ଼ୀ ଶୁଣି ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟାନ୍ୱିତ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ସମସ୍ତ ଦିନ ପରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ କମ୍ବଳ ଘୋଡ଼ିହୋଇ ବୁଢ଼ୀ ସହିତ ଗଳ୍ପ କରେ, କେତେବେଳେ କିଛିକ୍ଷଣପାଇଁ ଆପଣାର ଦୁଃଖ ଭୁଲିଯାଏ ।

ଫାଇଜିବୀ ଏଠାରେ ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ଆପଣାର ପ୍ରତିପତ୍ତି କରିନେଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ଭାବ ଭଙ୍ଗୀ, ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଦେଖି ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଧାରଣା ହେଲା, ଫାଇଜୀବିବି କୌଣସି ନବାବ ପରିବାରରୁ ଆସିଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେ ମଧ ତାହା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ତ୍ରୁଟି କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ; ବୃତ୍ତି ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ସେ ଗଭର୍ଣ୍ଣମେଣ୍ଟଙ୍କୁ ବିଶେଷ ଅନୁଗୃହୀତ କରିଅଛନ୍ତି, ଏହା ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି । ଆହୁରି ମଧ କହନ୍ତି ଯେ ଭାରତରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଶିକ୍ଷାର ଶୈଶବାବସ୍ଥା, ଭାରତର ଶିକ୍ଷା ତାଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ବହୁ ପରିମାଣରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ ।

ହଲର ଅପର ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ମେରିଆ ଗ୍ରେ ଟ୍ରେନିଙ୍ଗ କଲେଜ (Maria Gray Training College) ; ଏଠାରେ ପଚାଶ ଜଣ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି, ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ମନଃସଂଯୋଗ କରି ପାରିଲୁ ନାହିଁ, କାରଣ ମନ ସବୁବେଳେ ଦେଶପାଇଁ କାନ୍ଦୁ ଥିଲା । ଏହି କଲେଜରେ ମୁଁ କେବଳ ଦୁଇମାସ ମାତ୍ର ଥିଲି, ଦିନେ ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀରେ (Library) ବସି ସରଳା ଓ ମୁଁ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଯାଉଛୁଁ, ଏପରି ସମୟରେ ମୋର ସଙ୍ଗିନୀ ମୋତେ କହିଲେ, ''ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଯିବା, ରେଳଗାଡ଼ି ହାବଡ଼ି ଷ୍ଟେସନରେ କେଉଁ ସମୟର ପହୁଞ୍ଚିବ ?'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ''ମରିବା ବଞ୍ଚିବା ତାହାର କିଛି ଠିକଣା ନାହିଁ, ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରି ଯିବାର ସମୟ କିପରି କହିବି ?'' ତତ୍‌ପର ପଢ଼ାରେ ମନଃସଂଯୋଗ କରି ନ ପାରି ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀରୁ ବାହାରି ହଲକୁ ଗଲୁଁ ।

ପ୍ରଥମେ କହିଅଛି, ମୋର ଶରୀର ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଥିଲା; ଶୀତର ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନକୁ ଆସିଅଛି, ସୁତରାଂ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଶରୀର ଶୀତର ଆଧିକ୍ୟ ଯୋଗୁଁ ଅଧିକ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ବୋଧ ହେଲା; ମୋର ନିଜ କୋଠରିରେ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ସମୟ ରାବଣର ଚିତା ପରି ଅଗ୍ନି ଜଳାଇ ଘରକ ଗରମ ରଖିବାକୁ ହେଉଥିଲା,ବେଶି ଦିନ ଏପରି ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ରହିଲେ କୌଣସି କଠିନ ପୀଡ଼ା ହୋଇପାରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଠାର ଜଣେ ଭଲ ଡାକ୍ତର ସାର୍ ଟମାସ୍ ବାର୍ଲୋଙ୍କ (Sir Thomas Barlow) ନିକଟକୁ ଗଲି । ସେ ମୋତେ ଦେଖି କହିଲେ, ''କିଏ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଇ ତୁମ୍ଭକୁ ଏ ସମୟରେ ଶୀତପ୍ରଧାନ ଦେଶକୁ ପଠାଇଅଛି ? ମୋ କଥା ମାନି ନିଜ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରି ଯାଅ,

ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ତୁମ୍ଭପାଇଁ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ ନୁହେଁ ।'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି,''ସାହେବ, ଦୁଇ ସପ୍ତାହ ହେବ ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶକୁ ଆସିଅଛି, ଏଠାରେ ପଢ଼ିବି ବୋଲି ସ୍ଥିର କରିଅଛି, ଏତେ ବେଳେ ମୁଁ ଫେରିଯିବି ନାହିଁ, ତୁମ୍ଭେ କୌଣସି ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରି ମୋତେ ଏଠାରେ ରଖ ।'' ସାହେବ କହିଲେ, ''ତୁମ୍ଭେ କିଛିଦିନ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ରହିପାର, କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସବୁବେଳେ କୁହୁଡ଼ିରେ ଆଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ହେବ, ସେତେବେଳେ ଅପେକ୍ଷାକୃତ ଗରମ ସ୍ଥାନକୁ ତୁମ୍ଭକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ହେବ ।'' ଏହା କହି ମୋତେ କିଛି ବଳକାରକ ଔଷଧ ଦେଇ ବିଦାୟ ଦେଲେ । ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କ କଥାନୁଯାୟୀ ମୋତେ ନଭେମ୍ବର ଶେଷରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରିବାକୁ ହେଲ ।



ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର୍ (Windsor)

ଭାରତରୁ ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ପହୁଞ୍ଚିବାର ଦୁଇ ସପ୍ତାହ ପରେ ମୁଁ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ପତ୍ର ପାଇଲି । ଏହି ପତ୍ରରେ ତିନିଜଣ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ନାମ ସ୍ୱାକ୍ଷରିତ ଥିଲା । ଜଣେ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ମୃତ ବଖପ କ୍ରାଇଟନଙ୍କ (Creighton) ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଏ ହ୍ୟାମଡେନ କୋର୍ଟ (Hampden Court) ପ୍ରାସାଦରେ ଥାନ୍ତି; ଆଉ ଜଣେ ଲର୍ଡ ଲିଟଲଟନଙ୍କ (Lord littleton) କନ୍ୟା ମିସେସ୍ ୟାଲିଟନ୍ (Mrs. Alinton) ଏ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଭାରତର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ବଡଲାଟ ଲର୍ଡ ମିଣ୍ଟୋଙ୍କ ଭାଣିଜୀ, ଇଡନ କଲେଜର ଜଣେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଏହାଙ୍କର ବିବାହ ହୋଇଅଛି; ତୃତୀୟ ମହିଳା ବମ୍ବେର ଭୂତପୂର୍ବ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଜଜ ଚିଟିଙ୍କି (Chief Justice Chitty) ପୁତ୍ରବଧୂ, ଏ ମଧ୍ୟ କଲେଜର ଜଣେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ । ପାଠକ ପାଠିକା ! ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ମାଷ୍ଟର ବା ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମାନ କରି ଏମାନାଙ୍କର ସମ୍ମାନ ନୁହେଁ। ଏମାନେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଉଚ୍ଚ ଉପାଧିଧାରୀ (University of Cambridge and oxford), ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲର୍ଡ ବା ଡିଉକଙ୍କ କନ୍ୟାମାନେ ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ କୁଣ୍ଠିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ। ଅନେକ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଓ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଐଶ୍ୱର୍ଯ୍ୟଶାଳିନୀ ଓ ଉଚ୍ଚକୁଳୋଦ୍ଭବା ।

ପୂର୍ବୋକ୍ତ ପତ୍ରର ମର୍ମ ଏହି ଯେ କେତେକ ଇଂରେଜ ମହିଳା ଗୋଟିଏ ନୂତନ ସଭା ଗଠନ କରିବାକୁ ଇଛା କରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ତାହାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ତିନୋଟି; ପ୍ରଥମ — ବାଲ୍ୟବିବାହ ରହିତ କରିବା, ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ — ବିଧବାବିବାହ ପ୍ରଥା ପ୍ରଚଳିତ କରିବା ଏବଂ ବିଧବାମାନଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟବିଧ ଉନ୍ନତି ବିଧାନ କରିବା; ତୃତୀୟ —ସର୍ବତୋଭାବରେ ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ଉନ୍ନତି ପଥରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା; ତୃତୀୟ — ସର୍ବତୋଭାବରେ ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ଉନ୍ନତି ପଥରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା । ସେହି ପତ୍ରରେ ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଲିଖିତ ଥିଲା ଯେ, ଭାରତୀୟ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସାମାଜିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଉପରେ ଭାରତର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ୍ ଉନ୍ନତି ବହୁପରିମାଣରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁଅଛି । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସମୟରେ ଭାରତର ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଓ ଭାବଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ସତ୍ୟ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଭାରତୀୟ ରମଣୀମାନଙ୍କ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଅଦ୍ୟାବଧି ବିଶେଷ କିଛି

ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ସ୍କୁଲ କଲେଜରେ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ କରୁଥିବା ବାଳକ ଓ ଯୁବକଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ବାଳିକା ଓ ଯୁବତୀଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଅତି ଅଳ୍ପ । ଇଂରେଜ ମହିଳାଗଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ନାରୀ ମାନଙ୍କର ଭଗିନୀ ଏବଂ ଏକ ରାଜାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଜା, ତେଣୁ ଭାରତର ଦୁଃଖିନୀ ରମଣିଙ୍କୁ ଉନ୍ନତି ବିଧାନ ଅଭିପ୍ରାୟରେ କିଛି କରିବା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର କାନ୍ତ ଇଚ୍ଛା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେତେ ଭାରତ ବିଷୟ ଜାଣୁଅଛୁଁ, ଏଣିକି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଏ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କଠିନ ବୋଧ ହେଉଅଛି । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଦେଖୁଅଛୁଁ ଯେ, ଭାରତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଅନେକ ବିଷୟ ଜାଣିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସମିତି ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରିଅଛୁ; ଆଶା କରୁ, ତୁମ୍ଭେ ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି କହି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଏ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବ ।

ପତ୍ର ଖଣ୍ଡି ପଢ଼ି ସାରି ମୁଁ ଭାବିଲି, ମୋର ସାଧ୍ୟନୁସାରେ ମୁଁ ଏ ମହତ୍ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବି । ଯଦି ଏମାନେ ଛ ହଜାର ମାଇଲ ଦୂରସ୍ଥିତ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କ ଉନ୍ନତିପାଇଁ ଏତେ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ଭାରତର କନ୍ୟା, ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଦେଶୀୟ ଭଗିନୀମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କେତେ ଅଧିକ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ । ମୁଁ ସାଦରରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ନଭେମ୍ବର ୩ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ (୧୯୦୬ ଅବ୍ଦରେ) ମୋର ସଙ୍ଗିନୀ ସରଳାଙ୍କୁ ଘେନି ଲଣ୍ଡନ ଛାଡ଼ି ରେଲଗାଡିରେ ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ଗଲି । ଲଣ୍ଡନରୁ ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ଯିବାକୁ ଏକଘଣ୍ଟା ସମୟ ଲାଗେ ।

ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ଷ୍ଟେସନରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଦେଖିଲି, ଦୁଇଜଣ ଇଂରେଜ ରମଣୀ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଆସି ଅଭିବାଦନ କରି କହିଲେ, ''ଆଶା କରୁଁ ପଥରେ କୌଣସି କଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ନାହିଁ ।'' ପାଠକ ପାଠିକା ! ଆପଣମାନେ ହୁଏତ ଭାବୁଅଛନ୍ତି,ପୂର୍ବେ କଣ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆଳାପ ଥିଲା ଯେ ଗାଡିରୁ ନ ଓହ୍ଲାଉଣୁ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଚିହ୍ନିଲେ । ଭାରତ ମହିଳା, ତହିଁରେ ପୁଣି ସ୍କୁଲ କଲେଜରେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ପଢୁଅଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଛଡ଼ା ଶୀତର ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭରେ ବିଲାତରେ କେହି ରହନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସୁତରାଂ ଗାଡି ରହିବାମାତ୍ରକେ ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ଖୋଜି ବାହାର କରିବାକୁ ଟିକିଏ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ବିଳମ୍ବ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ସଯତ୍ନରେ ନିଜ ଘରକୁ ଅତିଥି କରି ଘେନିଗଲେ । ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଭଲ ବୋଧ ହେଲା, କାରଣ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ଦିନଗୁଡିକ ସବୁବେଳେ କୁଜ୍‌ଝଟିକାବୃତ,ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦେବଙ୍କ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ ଛବି ଦେଖିବା ବିରଳ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ସେପରି ନୁହେ, ଏଠାର ଆକାଶ ନିର୍ମଳ, ଦିବାଲୋକ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ । ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ଭୋଜନ ପରେ କହିଲେ, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଇଟ୍‌ନ କଲେଜ ଓ ଉଇଣ୍ଡସର ରାଜପ୍ରାସାଦ (Eton College and windsor castle) ଦେଖାଇବାକୁ ଘେନିଯିବେ ।

ଇଉଣ୍ଡସରରେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ରାଜାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରାସାଦ ଅଛି, ଏଠାରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱର୍ଗୀୟ ମହାରାଣୀ ଭିକ୍ଟୋରିଆଙ୍କର ସମାଧି ଅଛି । ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ସବୁ ରାଜାମାନଙ୍କର ସମାଧି-ମନ୍ଦିର ଲଣ୍ଡନର ଓୟେଷ୍ଟମିନିଷ୍ଟର ଆବିରେ(Westminister Abbey) ଅଛି, କେବଳ ଭିକ୍ଟୋରିଆଙ୍କ ସମାଧି ଉଇଣ୍ଡସ୍ରରେ ହୋଇଅଛି । ରାଜପ୍ରାସାଦ ଦେଖି ରାଜପ୍ରାସାଦ ପରି ମନେ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ, କାରଣ ଭାରତରେ ତଦପେକ୍ଷା ମନୋହର ରାଜପ୍ରାସାଦ ଅଦ୍ୟାପି ରାଜପୁତନା ଓ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ପ୍ରାସାଦର ନାନା ସ୍ଥାନ ପ୍ରଦକ୍ଷିଣ କରି ଅବଶେଷରେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଇଟନ୍ କଲେଜର ଧର୍ମମନ୍ଦିର ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଗଲୁ । ଏହି ମନ୍ଦିର ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ରାଜା ଷଷ୍ଠ ହେନେରୀ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରାଇଥିଲେ ଇଟନ୍ କଲେଜର ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦର୍ଶନୀୟ ପଦାର୍ଥ । ଏଥିରେ ଦ୍ୱାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ହସ୍ତଲିଖିତ ପୋଥି ସବୁ ଏବଂ ହେନେରୀଙ୍କର ହସ୍ତ-ଲିପି କେତେ ଯତ୍ନ ଓ ଆଦରରେ ବନ୍ଧା ହୋଇ ରକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଅଛି । ମୁଁ ଏହିସବୁ ଦେଖି ଭାବିଲି, ହାୟ ! ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ପୁରାତନ ସ୍ମୃତି କଣ ଅଛି । ପୋଥି ପତ୍ର ଯାହାଥିଲା, ଅଧିକାଂଶ ନଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଅଛି ଓ ଯାଉଅଛି । ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ରକ୍ଷା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଏପରି ଯତ୍ନ କିଏ କରୁଅଛି ? କେବଳ ଭାରତର ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଇତିହାସର ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଗୌରବ ଅଦ୍ୟାବଧି ପ୍ରସ୍ତରୀୟ ମନ୍ଦିର ପାଷାଣ ପାତ୍ରରେରେ ଖୋଦିତ ଅଛି ମାତ୍ର । ସେହିଗୁଡିକୁ ଦେଖି ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଭୂମିର ସଭ୍ୟଜାକି ବିସ୍ମୟରେ ଚକ୍ଷୁ ବିସ୍ଫାରିତ କରନ୍ତି । ଏହି କଥା ମନେ କରି ପ୍ରାଣ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ପୁଲକିତ ହେଲା ।

ଏହି ପୁସ୍ତକାଳୟର ତତ୍ତ୍ୱାବଧାରକ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗର୍ବସହକାରେ ପୁରାତନ ପୋଥି ପତ୍ର ଦେଖାଉ ଦେଖାଉ କହିଲେ,''ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଯେଉଁସବୁ ପୁରାତନ ସ୍ମୃତି ସଯତ୍ନରେ ରଖିଅଛୁ, ତୁମ୍ଭ ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ନୂତନ ବୋଧ ହେଉଥିବ, ମାତ୍ର ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶରେ ଏହା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅନେକ ପୁରାତନ ଗୌରବର ବସ୍ତୁ ଅଛି ।'' ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ ଦେଖି ସାରି କଲେଜର ଛାତ୍ରନିବାସ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଗଲୁ । ଏହି କଲେଜ ଅତି ପୁରାତନ, ଅନେକ ସ୍ଥାନ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯାଇଅଛି,କିନ୍ତୁ ପୁରାତନ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ରହିଅଛି । ଇଂରେଜ ନୂତନ ଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଜ୍ଞାନରେ ଏହାକୁ ନୂତନ କରି ପାରନ୍ତେ, ମାତ୍ର ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁରାତନ ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ପୁରାତନ କଲେଜ ଘରକୁ ଯତ୍ନର ସହିତ ରଖିବା ଗୌରବର ବିଷୟ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏଠାର ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ସବୁ ପୁରାତନ କାଳପରି । ଏହି କଲେଜରେ ଛ ଶତ ବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବେ ଯେପରି ରୀତି ନୀତି ଓ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଥିଲା,ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ତଦ୍ରୁପ ଅଛି । ସିଡ଼ିରେ ଉଠିବା ସମୟରେ ଦେଖିଲି,କବାଟ ଚୌକାଠ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର କବାଟ ଚୌକାଠ ପରି, ଏଠାରେ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଦ୍ୟାର କୌଣସି ଚିହ୍ନ ନାହିଁ । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏ ଘର ସେ ଘର ବୁଲି ଗୋଟିଏ, ସ୍କୁଲ ଛାତ୍ରର କୋଠରିରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲୁଁ । ଏହି ଛାତ୍ରଟି ଲର୍ଡ କ୍ଲିଫୋର୍ଡଙ୍କ (Lord Clifford) ପୁତ୍ର, ଛାତ୍ରଟିର ବୟସ ବାର ବର୍ଷ, ତାହାର କୁଟୀରଟି ସାମାନ୍ୟ, ତହିଁରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରି

ଦେଖିଲି, ସେଠାରେ ତାହାର ଶୋଇବାର ଖଟ ନାହିଁ । ମନେ କଲି ଏହା ପଢ଼ିବା ଘର । ପଚାରି ବୁଝିଲି, ସେ ଏହି ଘରେ ଶୁଏ, ପଢେ, ଲୁଗା ରଖେ, ତହାର ଯାହା କିଛି ପ୍ରୟୋଜନ ସବୁ ସେହି ଘରେ ଅଛି । ମୁଁ ତାହାର ଖଟ କେଉଁଠାରେ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ପଚାରିଲି, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀ ମୋତେ ସେହି ଘର ଖଟ ଖୋଜି ବାହାର କରିବାକୁ କହିଲେ । ମୁଁ ଘରର ଚାରିଆଡକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଦେଖିଲି, ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ମେଜରେ କେତେକଖଣ୍ଡ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଏବଂ ତାହାର ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କର କେତେକ ଛବି,ମୁହଁ ଧୋଇବା ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ମେଜ, ବସିବା ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ଚଉକି ଏବଂ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାନ ଆଲମାରୀ, ତା ଉପରେ କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଅଛି । ଏହା ଛଡା ସେ ଘରେ ଆଉ କିଛି ନ ଥିଲା । ସୁତରାଂ ମୁଁ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀଙ୍କୁ କହିଲି,ଏ ଘରେ ଖଟ କେଉଁଠାରେ ଅଛି, ମୁଁ କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ । ଏହା ଶୁଣି କ୍ଲିଫୋର୍ଡ ପୁତ୍ର ହସି ଆଲମାରୀ ଉପରୁ ବହିଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଅନ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ରଖି, ଆଲମାରୀଟିକୁ ଧରୀଟାଣିଦେଲା, ଆଲମାରୀଟି ଗୋଟିଏ ଖଟ ହୋଇଗଲା, ବିଛଣା ତକିଆ ତହିଁରୁ ସବୁ ବାହାରିଲା । ଏପରି କୌଶଳର ଉଦ୍ଦ୍ୟେଶ ଏହି ଯେ କୁଟୀରର ଆୟତନ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର, ଦିନ ବେଳେ ସେ ଘରେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ହୁଏ, ଖଟ ଥିଲେ ସ୍ଥାନର ଅଭାବ ହୁଅନ୍ତା,ସୁତରାଂ ଏପରି ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରିଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏହିପରି ଅନେକ କୋଠରୀ ଦେଖି, ଭାରତର ଭୂତପୂର୍ବ ରାଜପ୍ରତିନିଧି ଲର୍ଡ କର୍ଜନଙ୍କର ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ତୈଳଚିତ୍ର (Oil Painting) ଦେଖିଲି । ସେ ଏକ ସମୟରେ ଇଟନ୍‌ରେ ଛାତ୍ର ଥିଲେ । ଏହି ତୈଳଚିତ୍ର ସେହି ସମୟର । ଏହି କଲେଜରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦୀର୍ଘ ବାରନ୍ଦା ଅଛି । ଏହି ବାରନ୍ଦାର ଦୁଇପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡର ଅନେକ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କର ଛବି ରକ୍ଷିତ, ସେମାନେ ଏକସମୟରେ ଏହି କଲେଜର ଛାତ୍ର ଥିଲେ । ଛବି ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଦେଖି ମନରେ ହେଲା, ଭବିଷ୍ୟତରେ ହୁଏତ ପୁଣି ଜଣେ କେହି ଏହି କଲେଜରୁ ବାହାରି ଭାରତର ଲାଟ୍ ହେବେ । ସମ୍ଭବତଃ ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ଚିତ୍ରଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଏପରି ଭାବରେ ରଖିବାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ଏହି ଯେ ଛାତ୍ରମାନେ ସବୁବେଳେ ମହତ୍ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କର ଛବି ଦେଖି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପରି ହେବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିବେ । ଷଷ୍ଠ ହେନରୀ ଉହାଙ୍କର ରାଜତ୍ୱ ସମୟରେ ଏହି କଲେଜରେ ସାଧାରଣ ଛାତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ (ପରୀକ୍ଷାଦ୍ୱାରା ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ବିବେଚିତ ହେଲେ) ସତୁରିଟି ବୃତ୍ତି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ କରି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସତୁରି ଜଣ ଲେଖାଏଁ ସେହି ବୃତ୍ତି ପାଉଅଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କିଙ୍ଗସ୍ ସ୍କଲାର (King's Scholar) କହନ୍ତି । ଏମାନେ ସେହି ସ୍କୁଲ ଘରେ ଥାନ୍ତି, ଆଉ ହଜାରେ ଛାତ୍ର କଲେଜ ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ବସାରେ ଥାନ୍ତି । ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ବସାରେ ୩୦/୪୦ ଜଣ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଥାନ୍ତି,ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଜଣେ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଥାନ୍ତି । ଏଠାରେ ପିଲାମାନେ ଏକା ପ୍ରକାର ପୋଷାକ ପିନ୍ଧନ୍ତି, ଏମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱଭାବ ଚରିତ୍ର, ରୀତି ନୀତି ଭାରି ଉତ୍ତମ । ଏଠାରେ ବାଳକମାନେ ବାରବର୍ଷ ବୟସରୁ ଅଠର ବର୍ଷ ବୟସ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି । ତତ୍‌ପରେ କେମ୍ବ୍ରିଜ ବା ଦିଅକ୍ସଫୋର୍ଡ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସହିତ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କଲି । ସେମାନେ ଜଣେ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାକୁ ଉତ୍‌ସାହର ସହିତ କଲେଜର

ଅନେକ କଥା କହିଲେ । ଅନେକ କ୍ଷଣ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କଲେଜରେ ବୁଲି ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିଲୁଁ ।

ସେହିଦିନ ଉପରଓଳି ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀ ସେଠାରେ କେତେକ ସମ୍ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଆଳାପ କରାଇ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ଚା ପାନର ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କର କି ଅମାୟିକ ଭାବ ! ଭାରତର କଥା ଜାଣିବାକୁ କେଡ଼େ ଉତ୍‌ସାହ ଦେଖିଲି, ଭାରତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ସେମାନେ କିଛି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ଯାହା କିଛି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ତାହା ବିକୃତ ଭାବରେ ଶୁଣି ଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେମାନେ ମନେ କରନ୍ତି, ଭାରତ ମହିଳାର ଦୁଃଖର ସୀମା ନାହିଁ। ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଜଣେ ମୋତେ କହିଲେ,''ମୁଁ ଶୁଣିଛି ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ରମଣୀମାନେ ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖିନୀ ।'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ''ମୁଁ ତ ସେହି ଦେଶର ଜଣେ ରମଣୀ, ମୋତେ ଦେଖି କଣ ମନେ କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ?'' ସେ କହିଲେ, ''ତୁମ୍ଭେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟଧର୍ମାବଲମ୍ବିନୀ, ସତ୍ୟର ଆଲୋକ ପାଇଅଛ, ସୁତରାଂ ତୁମ୍ଭେ ସୁଖୀ, କିନ୍ତୁ ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତେ ପୌତ୍ତଳିକ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ କିପରି ସୁଖକର ହୋଇପାରେ ?'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ତୁମ୍ଭେମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂଜକ, ସତ୍ୟର ଆଲୋକ ପାଇଅଛ, ଏ କଥା ସମସ୍ତେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି, ତୁମ୍ଭେ କଣ କହିପାର ଯେ ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ସବୁ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସୁଖୀ ?'' ସେ ହସି ହସି କହିଲେ, ''ନା, ମୁଁ ତାହା କହି ପାରିବି ନାହିଁ ।'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି,''ତେବେ ମୁଁ କିପରି କହିବି ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସବୁ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଦୁଃଖୀ ? ସବୁ ଦେଶରେ ସୁଖୀ ଦୁଃଖୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ତୁମ୍ଭ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରମାନେ ଯାହାକୁ ସୁଖ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରନ୍ତି, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ହୁଏତ ତାକୁ ସୁଖ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।'' ତପ୍ରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଆଉ ଜଣେ କହିଲେ, ''ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଶୁଣିଅଛୁ ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ କ୍ରୀତଦାସୀ ତୁଲ୍ୟ ମନେ କରନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେହି ଭାବରେ ରଖନ୍ତି । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଜଣେ ଲେଡି ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କ (ଯେ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ତଃପୁର ମାନଙ୍କରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ) ନିକଟରୁ ଶୁଣିଅଛୁଁ, ସେ ଭାରତରେ ଅନ୍ତଃପୁରରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରି ଦେଖିଅଛନ୍ତି, ଅପରିଷ୍କାର ସାନ ସାନ ଘର ଓ ସାନ ସାନ ଝିଡିକି, ମାଟିର ପ୍ରଦୀପ, ମଇଳା ବିଛଣା, ଦଉଡ଼ିବନ୍ଧା ମଶୁରି, କାନ୍ଥରେ ଚୂନ କାଳୀ ଓ ହାତପୋଛା ମଇଳାର ଦାଗ ଦେଖି ତାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ହେଲା ''କି ସର୍ବନାଶ, କି ଭୟାନକ କଷ୍ଟର ଜୀବନ ଏମାନଙ୍କର !'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ''ଏ କଥା ସତ୍ୟ, ମାତ୍ର ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଗୃହ ସେପରି ନୁହେଁ ।'' ପୁଣି ଆଉ ଜଣେ କହିଲେ, ''ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନଭାବେ ଥାଇଁ ସୁଖ ଭୋଗ କରନ୍ତି, ତୁମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ପରାଧୀନା, ସୁତରାଂ ସେ ପ୍ରକାର ସୁଖ କଦାଚ ଅନୁଭବ କରି ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।'' ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ''ଇଂରେଜମହିଳା ପାରିବାରିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କେଉଁ ଅଂଶରେ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ମୁଁ ତାହା କହି ପାରିବି ନାହିଁ, ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଏ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ରମଣୀମାନଙ୍କ ଅଧିକାର ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣରୂପେ ଅକ୍ଷୁଣ୍ଣ । ଯଦି ରାଜନୀତି ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କହନ୍ତି, ତାହା ହେଲେ ସେ କଥା ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର, ଏ

ବିଷୟରେ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପାଇବାକୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।'' ଭାରତର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଏହିପରି ନାନା କଥା ହେଲା । ବୁଝିଲି, ମିସନାରୀମାନେ (ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ ପାଦ୍ରୀ) ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଭଲ ଛବି ଅଙ୍କିତ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି, ନ କରିବାର କାରଣ ଏହି ଯେ ଏଥିରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ଅଛି । ସେମାନେ ଯଦି ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡରେ ଭାରତର ଅଜ୍ଞାନାନ୍ଧକାରପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦୁଃଖର ଛବି ଅଙ୍କିତ ନ କରନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡବାସୀ ଭାରତୀୟ ମିସନରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବେ ନାହିଁ ଓ ମିସନରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବିକା ଭଲରୂପେ ନିର୍ବାହ ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ତାହା ବୋଲି ଆପଣମାନେ କେହି ମନେ କରିବେ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ମିସନାରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର କ୍ଷତି ହୋଇଅଛି; ସେମାନେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶ ପାଇଁ ଯାହା କରିଅଛନ୍ତି, ତାହା ପାଇଁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ଚିରଦିନ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ କୃତଜ୍ଞ ହେବା ଉଚିତ । ମାତ୍ର ଦୁଃଖର ବିଷୟ, ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡରେ ଭାରତ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯେ ସମସ୍ତ ଭ୍ରମ ଅଛି, ମିସନାରୀମାନେ ତାହାର ମୂଳ କାରଣ ।

ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ସମୟରେ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଅଲିକନଙ୍କ ଭବନରେ ରାତ୍ରଭୋଜନର ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଥିଲା । ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ଲୋକର କନ୍ୟା, କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କର କି ଅମାୟିକ ଭାବ ! କି ଭଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର ! ମୁଁ ଏହାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଦୁଇ ତିନି ଘଣ୍ଟା କଥା କହିଲି, ମାତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭାରତର କେଉଁ ଅଂଶରେ ତାହା ଏଠାରେ କେହି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଅନେକ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ମୁଁ ଭାରତ ବା ଇଣ୍ଡିଆର ମାନଚିତ୍ର ଦେଖାଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶା କେଉଁଠାରେ ଦେଖାଇ ଦିଏ । ଏମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହର ବିରୋଧୀ । ମୁଁ କହିଲି, ''ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶରୁ ଆସିଅଛି, ସେଠାରେ ଏପରି ବାଲ୍ୟବିବାହ ନାହିଁ ।'' ସେମାନେ ଭାରତର ସର୍ବତ୍ର ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରଥା ଅଛି ବୋଲି ମନେ କରିଥିଲେ, ମୋର ଏ କଥା ଶୁଣି ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବୋଧ କଲେ । ଏହିରୂପେ ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଦୁଇଦିନ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଚିଟୀଙ୍କ ଆତିଥ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରି ତୃତୀୟ ଦିନରେ ବିମର୍ଷ ହୃଦୟରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନକୁ ଫେରିଲୁଁ ।



ବିଲାତପ୍ରବାସ

ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ରବିବାର

ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବିଲାତ ଯାଇ ନଥିଲି, ଏ ଦେଶରେ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ବିଲାତରେ ରବିବାର କିପରି କଟାଇବାକୁ ହୁଏ, ସେ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଅନେକ କଥା ଶୁଣିଥିଲି । ରବିବାର ଦିନଟି ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ବିଶ୍ରାମର ଦିନ ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ସେ ଦିନ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟୀୟାନମାନେ କୌଣସି ବିଷୟ କର୍ମ ନକରି ବିଶ୍ରାମ କରନ୍ତି । ଏହିଠାରେ ଅନେକ ଥର ଶୁଣିଅଛି ଯେ ବିଲାତରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏହି ରବିବାର ଦିନଟିକୁ ବିଶ୍ରାମର ଦିନ ମନେ କରି ଈଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ ଉପାସନାରେ କଟାଇଥାନ୍ତି । ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ କୌଣସି ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ଯେ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ପ୍ରାୟ ଅଧିକାଂଶ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବନ୍ଦ ରହେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବିଲାତରେ ଯେପରି ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବନ୍ଦ ହୁଏ, ଦୋକାନ ହାଟ ବନ୍ଦ ରହେ, ଏ ଦେଶରେ ସେପରି ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ତାହାରି କାରଣ ଏହି ଯେ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ନାନା ଧର୍ମାବଲମ୍ବୀ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ବାସ ଏବଂ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ରବିବାର ଦିନଟି ବିଶ୍ରାମର ଦିନ ନୁହେଁ । ସେହିହେତୁରୁ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ରବିବାର ସେପରି ନୀରବ ଓ ନିସ୍ତବ୍ଧ ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ବିଲାତ ଯାଏ, ସେତେବେଳେ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ରବିବାର ଦିନର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟାନ୍ୱିତ ହୋଇଗଲା । ମୁଁ ପୂର୍ବେ ଯେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହରରେ ସପ୍ତାହର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦିନମାନଙ୍କର ସଜୀବତା କଁଥା ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରିଅଛି, ତାହା ଜୀବନରେ କେଉଁଠାରେ ଦେଖିବ ବୋଲି ମନେ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେହି ଲଂଣ୍ଡନ ସହରକୁ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳରେ ଦେଖିଲେ ମନେ ହୁଏ ଯେପରି ଜନତାଶୂନ୍ୟ ପଲ୍ଲୀଗ୍ରାମରେ ଆସି ପଡ଼ିଅଛି । ସମସ୍ତ ନିସ୍ତବ୍ଧ ; ଦେଖିଲେ ମନେ ହୁଏ ଯେ ଏ ସହରରେ ଅଳ୍ପ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ବାସ । ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦିନ ଯେ ସମସ୍ତ ଦୋକାନରେ ସହସ୍ର ସହସ୍ର ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସମାଗମ ହେଉଥିଲା, ସେ ସମସ୍ତ ଦୋକାନ ବନ୍ଦ । କୌଣସିଠାରେ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ଚିହ୍ନ ନାହିଁ । ଯେଉଁ ସବୁ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଅବିରତ ମଟରକାର, ଘୋଡାଗାଡି, ଟ୍ରାମଗାଡି, ମଟର ବସ୍ ଯିବା ଆସିବା କରୁଥିଲା, ସେ ସମସ୍ତ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ରବିବାର ସକାଳବେଳେ କଦାଚିତ୍ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଅଧେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଗୋଚର ହୁଏ । ଯେଉଁସବୁ (Futpath) ରେ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦିନମାନଙ୍କରେ ଅଜସ୍ର ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ଗମନାଗମନ ହୁଏ, ସେଥିରେ କ୍ୱଚିତ୍ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିଓଟି ଲୋକ ଯେ ଲଣ୍ଡନର ରବିବାର କଥା ନ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସପ୍ତାହର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦିନ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହରକୁ ଦେଖିଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେ ହଠାତ୍ ରବିବାରର ଏହି ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ମନେ କରିବେ ଯେ ସହରରେ କୌଣସି ମହାମାରୀର ପ୍ରାଦୁର୍ଭାବରୁ ସହରର ସମସ୍ତ ଲୋକେ ଘରଦ୍ୱାର ଛାଡି ପଳାଇଅଛନ୍ତି ବା କୌଣସି ଐନ୍ଦ୍ରଜାଲିକ ବିଦ୍ୟା ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ସମସ୍ତ

ଲୋକେ ଶୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଅଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ବସ୍ତୁତଃ ତାହା ନୁହେଁ । ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଲୋକମାନେ ସପ୍ତାହର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦିନ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଟିକିଏ ବିଳମ୍ବରେ ବିଛଣାରୁ ଉଠନ୍ତି । ସପ୍ତାହ ଦିନରେ ଲୋକମାନେ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳୀନ ଭୋଜନ ସାଢ଼େ ଆଠଟା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସମାପ୍ତ କରି ସାଢ଼େ ନଅଟା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଯେ ଯାହାର କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନକୁ ଚାଲିଯାନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ରବିବାର ଦିନ କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନ ସବୁ ବନ୍ଦ ଥିବାରୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ଅଧଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ବା ଏକଘଣ୍ଟା ବେଶି ବିଛାରେ ବିଶ୍ରାମ କରନ୍ତି । ସାଢ଼େ ଆଠଟା ବା ନଅଟା ପୂର୍ବରୁ କେହି ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳୀନ ଆହ୍ୱାନ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ପରିବାରରେ ଥିଲି, ସେ ପରିବାରଟି ବିଲାତରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସମ୍ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ପରିବାର । ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତା ପାର୍ଲିଆମେଣ୍ଟର ଜଣେ ସଭ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ବ୍ୟାରନ୍ ଉପାଧିଧାରୀ । ଏହି ପରିବାରଟି ଉଚ୍ଚ ବଂଶୀୟ ଓ ଧନୀ ଏବଂ ଧାର୍ମିକ ପରିବାର, ଏମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଥାଇ ମୁଁ ଅନେକ ଭଲ ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିଅଛି ଏବଂ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ବାସ କରିବାକୁ ମତେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ଏହି ଦିନ ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତା ପୁତ୍ର, କନ୍ୟା ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସହିତ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳୀନ ଆହାର ପୂର୍ବେ ସମସ୍ତ ଦାସ ଦାସୀ ଓ ଅତିଥିମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ପାରିବାରିକ ଉପାସନା କରନ୍ତି ଓ ତପ୍ତରେ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳୀନ ଭୋଜନ ସମାପ୍ତ କରନ୍ତି । ଯଦିବା ଏହି ପରିବାରରେ ଅନେକ ଦାସ ଦାସୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ତଥାପି ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତା ରବିବାର ଦିନ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବେଶି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ନ ଦେଇ ବିଶ୍ରାମ ଦିଅନ୍ତି; କେବଳ ଯେ ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନ କଲେ ନ ଚଳେ, ସେହି ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଏପରିକି ଯେଉଁ ସମୟରେ ଏମାନେ ଭୋଜନରେ ଉପବିଷ୍ଟ ହୁଅନ୍ତି, ଦାସଦାସୀ ମାନେ ସେ ସମୟରେ ଆପଣା ଆପଣା ଭୋଜନ ଶେଷ କରିବା ସକାଶେ ଛୁଟିପାନ୍ତି ଏବଂ କନ୍ୟା ବା ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତା ଭୋଜନବେଳେ ପରିବେଷଣ କରନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ଦାସଦାସୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଈଶ୍ୱରୋପାସନା ସକାଶେ ଭଜନାଳୟକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ହେବ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁ ଘରେ ଏପରି ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ରବିବାର ଦିନ ବିଲାତରେ ଦାସଦାସୀମାନେ ପାଳିକରି ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଅପରାହ୍ଣରେ ଦୁଇଟାଠାରୁ ରାତ୍ର ଦଶଟା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଛୁଟି ପାନ୍ତି । ସେହି ସମୟରେ ସେମାନେ ଆପଣା ଆପଣା ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ କରନ୍ତି କିମ୍ବା ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାରେ ଆପଣା ଆପଣା ଛୁଟି କଟାନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ପରିବାରର କଥା କହୁଅଛି, ଏହିପରି ବିଲାତରେ ଅନେକ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ମୋହର ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟବଶତଃ ମୁଁ ଏହିପରି ଅନେକ ପରିବାରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବରେ କଟାଇଅଛି । ପ୍ରାତଃଭୋଜନ ଶେଷ କରି ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପୁତ୍ର କନ୍ୟା ସହ ଈଶ୍ୱରୋପାସନା କରିବାକୁ ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଯିବା ସକାଶେ ବାହାରନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଯେଉଁ ଗିର୍ଜାକୁ ଯିବା ପାଇଁ ବାହାରିଲି, ମତେ ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପଚାରିଲେ, ତୁମ୍ଭେ ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଚାଲିକରି ଯାଇପାରିବ କି ନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ସେମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକ ବା ଦୁଇ ମାଇଲ ବାଟ ଚାଲିକରି ଯାନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ପୂର୍ବେ କହିଅଛି ଯେ ଏହି ପରିବାରଟି ଧନୀ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ପାଠକ ପାଠିକାମାନେ ପଢ଼ିବେ ଯେ ଏମାନେ ଚାଲିକରି ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଯାଉଅଛନ୍ତି ଅଥଚ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଘରେ

ଗାଡ଼ି, ମଟର କାର ପ୍ରଭୃତିର ଅଭାବ ନାହିଁ, ସେତେବେଳେ ମନେ କରିବେ ଯେ ଏମାନେ ଅତି ନିର୍ବୋଧ । ତାହା ନ ହେଲେ ଏତେ କଷ୍ଟ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରି ଚାଲକରି ଯିବେ କାହିଁକି ! ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କ ଦେଶରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ଯେ ବଡ଼ଲୋକମାନେ ଗାଡ଼ିଘୋଡ଼ା ଥିଲେ ପଦବ୍ରଜରେ କୌଣସିଠାକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ମନେ କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମାନହାନି ହେବ ଏବଂ ଯେତେବେଳେ ପଇସାଦେଇ ଗାଡ଼ି ଘୋଡ଼ା କିଣିଅଛନ୍ତି, ସେତେବେଳେ ସେହି ପଇସାର ମୂଲ୍ୟ କାହିଁକି ଧରିନେବେ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହି ପରିବାରରେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଘୋଡ଼ା ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଚାଲି ଯିବାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ଟିକିଏ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଗଲି ଗୃହକର୍ତ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମତେ ବୁଝାଇ କହିଲେ ଯେ ଘୋଡା, ସଇସ ଓ କୋଚମାନ୍ ସପ୍ତାହଯାକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରି କରି ଏହି ରବିବାର ଦିନ ବିଶ୍ରାମ କରନ୍ତି । ଅତଏବ ସେମାନେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଘୋଡ଼ା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ମୋର ଯଦି ଚାଲିଯିବାର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ନ ଥାଏ, ତେବେ ମୋପାଇଁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଭଡ଼ାଗାଡ଼ି (ଯଦି ବା ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଭଡ଼ାଗାଡ଼ି ପାଇବା ଟିକିଏ କଷ୍ଟକର) ଆଣି ଦେଇ ପାରନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦେଖିଲି ଯେ ସେମାନେ ଏଡ଼େ ବଡ଼ ଲୋକ ହୋଇ ଚାଲି କରି ସହର ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଯାଉଅଛନ୍ତି,ସେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ଚାଲି ଯିବାର ସେପରି ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ନ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଚାଲି ଯିବାକୁ ଆଗ୍ରହ ପ୍ରକାଶ କଲି । ଏହିଦିନ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଲଣ୍ଡନ ସହରରେ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଚାଲିକରି ଯାଇଥିଲି ଏବଂ ଚାଲିକରି ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଯାଇ ଯେପରି ଆନନ୍ଦଉପଭୋଗ କରିଥିଲି ତାହା କେବେହେଁ ଭୁଲିବି ନାହିଁ ।

ଯେଉଁ ସହର ରବିବାର ଦିନ ପ୍ରାତଃକାଳରେ ଶୋଇଥିଲା, ସେହି ସହର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଯେପରି ଚେଇଁ ଉଠିଅଛି । ବେଳ ସାଢ଼େ ଏଗାରଟା ସମୟରେ ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଗିର୍ଜାର ଘଣ୍ଟା ଢ଼ଂ ଢ଼ଂ ଶବ୍ଦରେ ବାଜି ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ଆହ୍ୱାନ କରୁଅଛି । ଗୀର୍ଜାରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ବାଜା ସବୁ ବାଜୁଅଛି ଏବଂ ତାହା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସୁମଧୁର ଗୀତ ଶୁଣା ଯାଉଅଛି, କେଉଁଠାରେ ବକ୍ତୃତା ଶୁଣା ଯାଉଅଛି । ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ରାସ୍ତା ଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହିଁ ଚାହିଁ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଚାଲୁଥାଏ । ଦେଖିଲି, ଯେଉଁ ସବୁ ପଥରେ ଲୋକମାନେ ଗୀର୍ଜାକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି ସେ ସବୁ ପଥ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଅଳ୍ପ ସମୟରେ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଯେଉଁ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହଁ, ସେହିଆଡ଼େ ଧଳାମୁହଁ କଳା ପୋଷାକ ଛଡ଼ା ଆଉ କିଛି ଦେଖାଯାଉ ନାହିଁ । ସାଢ଼େ ବାରଟା ପରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତ ଗୀର୍ଜାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଶେଷ ହୁଏ । ସେହି ସମୟରେ ଲଣ୍ଡନର Hide-park (ଗୋଟିଏ ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ବଗିଚା) ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ସହସ୍ର ସହସ୍ର ନରନାରୀ ହସ୍ତରେ ଧର୍ମପୁସ୍ତକ ଓ ଗୀତି ପୁସ୍ତକ ଧରି ଗୃହକୁ ଫେରି ଯାଉଅଛନ୍ତି । ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ କେବଳ ଲୋକ ଦେଖାଯାଉଅଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ କେଉଁଠାରେ ବା ମଟର ବସ୍ ଦୁଇ ଚାରିଟା ଚାଲିଅଛି । ବେଳ ଦୁଇଟା ସମୟରେ ଏମାନେ ଯାହାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ଭୋଜନ ବା Lunch କହନ୍ତି ରବିବାର ଦିନ ତାହା ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଘରେ ରାତ୍ରିଭୋଜନର ସ୍ଥାନ ଅଧିକାର କରେ । ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ପୂର୍ବେ କହିଅଛି, ଦାସ

ଦାସୀମାନେ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନିଅନ୍ତି । ସୁତରାଂ ରାତ୍ରିଭୋଜନ ପାଇଁ ବେଶିକିଛି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ସେହି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦିନବେଳେ ଶେଷ କରି ଅପରାହ୍ନ ଦୁଇଟାଠାରୁ ଛୁଟି ନିଅନ୍ତି ।

ମୁଁ ପୂର୍ବେ ଯେଉଁ ପରିବାର କଥା କହିଅଛି, ସେ ପରିବାରରେ Lunch ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ଭୋଜନ ପରେ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପୁତ୍ର କନ୍ୟାମାନେ ଧର୍ମ ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ବଡ଼ ଭଗିନୀଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଗମନ କରନ୍ତି । ମଧ୍ୟମା କନ୍ୟା ଗରିବ ବାଳକବାଳିକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଧର୍ମ ବିଷୟ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବା ପାଇଁ ରବିବାର ତିନିଟା ପରେ କୌଣସି ଗୋଟାଏ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ ଯାଇ ପଢ଼ାନ୍ତି । ବିଲାତରେ ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକମାନେ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପୁତ୍ରକନ୍ୟାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଧର୍ମୋପଦେଶ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସେଦିନ ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ପଠାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଘରେ ମା କିମ୍ବା ବଡ଼ ଭଉଣୀ ଧର୍ମୋପଦେଶ ଦେବାର ଭାର ଗ୍ରହଣ କରନ୍ତି । ରବିବାର ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ କେବଳ ଗରିବ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପୁତ୍ର କନ୍ୟାମାନେ ଓ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ବା ଦୋକାନଦାରଙ୍କ ପୁତ୍ର କନ୍ୟାମାନେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଯାନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଭଦ୍ରକନ୍ୟାମାନେ ସେଠାକୁ ଯାଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଏହି ମଧ୍ୟମା କନ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ରବିବାସରୀୟ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଦେଖିବାପାଇଁ Hide-park ବାଟେ ଯାଇଥିଲି ।



From A Look Before and After

(ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ)

FOREWORD

Raj Bhavan, Bombay
20th April, 1956

Srimati Shoila Bala Das' life is inextricably connected with the growth of Orissa in the course of the last 60 years or so. When I look back in my own imagination to the days when Shri Madhu Sudan Das chose to settle down in Orissa and work for her uplift, I quite clearly visualise the enormous difficulties which he must have undergone to bring up a Province which was, for no fault of hers, utterly neglected by the then British Government. It was open to shri M.S. Das to have chosen to settle down in Calcutta where he had the opportunity to rise to his full stature, but he chose to work in Orissa because of the sympathy for his kith and kin which was in his blood.

Shrimati Shoila Bala Das was not only the daughter of Shri M.S.Das but was also his virtual Secretary in all his undertakings. In that way, the life of Shrimati Shoila Bala Das is intimately connected with all the activities of Shri M.S. Das. In matters of education, social reforms and of political awakening, Shrimati Shoila Bala Das worked directly under Shri M.S. Das for over half a century. Whatever we see today in Orissa owes its origin to Shri M.S.Das' conception and Shrimati Shoila Bala Das' hand in operation. In the field of women's education in Orissa, particularly, Shrimati Shoila Bala Das name will go down in history as the pioneer. Today she is an octogenarian but her energy surpasses that of many youths.

She has now written her Autobiography which, I am sure, will throw a flood of light on that period about which we have no written record so far. How one wishes that Shri M.S. Das had written his Memoirs

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• Cuttack : 1956

for the benefit of the coming generations. From the point of view of study of the current history of Orissa, Shrimati Shoila Bala Das' Autobiography will indirectly throw light on the conditions prevailing throughout India in those days when the country was completely in the grip of foreign rule without any hope whatsoever of recovery. I congratulate her on her contribution and convey, in this short foreword my gratefulness and that of my generation to her for what she has done for Orissa in this long period of about half a century. I trust her Autobiography will be popular reading and helpful to students of history.

Sd. H. Mahatab

Governor of Bombay

INTRODUCTION

I have great pleasure in writing few lines as a foreword to a small book that has been written by Miss Shoila Bala Das.

I have known Miss Das for more than half a century to be precise, from 1897 when I joined my service as an Assistant Magistrate and Collector at Cuttack. While in Cuttack my wife and I came in close contact with Miss Das and a great personality in her father Mr. M. S. Das– the Great Madhusudan who may verily be described as the maker of Orissa. A close friendship sprung up between my wife and Miss Das – a friendship that continued unabated till my wife died many years later.

Ever since 1897 I watched the career of Miss Das and my wife and I often felt great delight in observing that Miss Das in all her doings and activities followed the high principles of her illustrious father. Miss Das's activities were not confined to one or two matters only. They were widespread and covered many spheres of life as will be amply borne out by the events narrated in this little book.

Miss Das has been instrumental in securing for the members of her sex a number of rights and privileges that had till then been all denied to them and for this she had to fight many a tough battle with the authorities. Miss Das had indeed been a born fighter, but if a fighter, she has, like her father, always fought for the weak, for people who have been in trouble and distress and fought for justice against injustice.

Some of the reminiscences of her life as have been mentioned in this little book will be found highly interesting and the reader will, I am sure, get from them not only great pleasure but high enjoyment as well

S.C. Mullick

Ex. Judge, Calcutta High Court

None can correctly appraise the work and worth of Madhusudan Das unless he takes into account the training he imparted to Miss S. B. Das, which enabled her to distinguish herself in various spheres of public activities. Miss Shoila Bala Das is a daughter of Madhusudan Das's life long friend late Sri Ambica Charan Hazra. She was born at Madhusudan Das's house in calcutta and he wished to make her his own child being childless and trained and educated her. After her mother's death he took her and gave her his own name and she was known to the public as Madhusudan Das's daughter, with the result that she has been a very prominent figure in Bihar and Orissa in advancing the cause of Indian Women.

While Miss Das was in England in 1907 it was decided by her guardian that she would be presented at the court of their Majesties King Edward and Queen Alexendra. As she did not wish to appear before their Majesties in English costume, a great commotion was thus produced by her stubborn attitude, as the Sari was not regarded till then as a recognised Court dress. She was asked to follow the prescribed court formalities and etiquette, but she would not agree and she insisted that in paying her homage to their Majesties she would adopt not only her country's costume, but also the Indian mode of solution. At last the permission was given to her and she was presented.

Miss Das has worked all her life for the uplift of Indian Women and among her many valuable services may be recalled her securing for them the right to practise in the Indian Law Courts, by having the Indian Legal Practitioners' Act amended. It was through her and her sister's persistent efforts that Government brought in an amending Bill, so that the women in India will have the right to practice in Courts of law.

She was for years a fellow of the Patna University and was also elected to the syndicate, in which capacity she acquitted herself creditably. In 1924 she was nominated a member of the Utkal University It fell to my lot, as the law member of the then Provincial Government, to appoint her as an Honorary Magistrate, and she was the first woman in India to hold that office in Patna for years with great distinction.

Her works in the Education field in Orissa are well known she was the pioneer in the women's higher education field in Orissa and all her movements are unique and will find a prominent place in the history of the emancipation of Indian Women.

SACHIDANANDA SINHA,

Vice Chancellor, Patna University.

I deem it a privilege to be asked to write a preface to the memoirs of Miss Shoilabala Das. I met Miss Das years ago, when the All-India Women's Conference met in Patna for its third annual session in 1928. Since then we had met at other conferences. Then there was a lapse of over twenty years when we did not meet at all. In May 1952, we met again in the political arena, now as colleagues in the new Council of States. Living almost next door to each other in the Western Court, we walked in and out of each other's company and shared our thoughts without reserve.

What impressed me most in, and evoked my admiration of, Miss Das is her utter honesty and forthrightness. It is not in her nature to mince matters or beat about the bush. She would call a spade a sapde, and the book is full of such incidents which show up the consequences of her behaviour when faced with arrogance or injustice. We may doubt the helpfulness of such a behaviour but we cannot deny that it has its advantages with honest people. And in the last analysis, Miss Das's methods have not failed. Her various activities throughout her long life of public work bear testimony to it.

In Delhi Miss Das took full advantage of her age and experience. Commanded ministers and deputy ministers about as if they were her own children. She was universally loved and respected as the "Grannie of the House". Her sense of duty , her constant concern for the welfare of women and children, her desire to get all possible help from the Centre for Orissa made her almost the only spokesman from Orissa in the Council of States from the Government Benches. If she found the Council debates repetitious and dull, meaningless and wasteful, she also found in Delhi opportunities for acquainting the ministries with the problems of Orissa. More than that, any person in distress found in her a sympathetic listener; and indeed no pains were spared to help the needy or bring justice to the oppressed. I am sure that she will be missed by the many whose cause against injustice she upheld; but gratitude will brighten the evening of her life.

What is said above refers only to the last two years of her life in Delhi. Her work in Orissa continues; and will continue as her vitality is undiminished. She still has the joy of living; age certainly has not withered her. Miss Das is a rare personality. She has tremendous enthusiasm for

doing things; her spirit of adventure, worthy of emulation, will put many younger people to shame. She is buoyant and every difficulty is a challenge to her and she meets it like a seasoned fighter. Today her chief concern is to make the life of women in India better than what it has been hitherto. She feels concerned about their general backwardness because she believes, as many of us do, that unless they are educated and given opportunities to participate in national life in a larger measure, the pace of progress will be slow. This of course is an undeniable fact.

Miss Das's love of work, innate sense of justice, courage and persistence in getting things done are qualities which women should learn from her. They are the qualities of pioneer women all over the world and as a young country we need them in a large measure to insure our freedom. In conclusion I wish Miss Das long life and physical strength to carry out her various projects for the welfare of women and children in Orissa and success in her endeavours to raise the status of Indian women and the prestige of our land.

Lakshmi N. Menon, M.P.

External Affairs.

It is a privilege to be asked to write these few lines introducing to the public a woman of such outstanding personality as Shoila Bala Das. I have known Shoila Bala all my life and have seen her go through her life with unabated energy in many and varied fields.

Born of Bengali parents, she was adopted by the Grand Old Man of Orissa – Madhu Sudan Das – the brilliant and unique son of Orissa. Shoila Bala's life was moulded in the halo of that brilliance. She came in contact with high and low, rich and poor, great and small. Her many friends including Governors, Judges and others in high position had often asked her to write an autobiography and now in her old age she gives to her friends "A look before and after." It is a most engaging story of a life with unique opportunities an experiences, used to the utmost.

Long ago I saw a Picture where a man and woman play the most important role.. After some hair raising incidents in which the woman excels herself, the man, with a smile about his lips exclaimed – what a woman . I am sure the readers of this book, after they have finished reading will join with me , with smiles playing about the lips in saying – what a woman.

N.B. Shome

Inspectress School (Retd.)

PART - I

CHAPTER - I

"I AM BORN"

I am a great talker. I loved to talk to my friends about some of my reminiscences of the past. I have innumerable friends. Some of my friends have been asking me again and again to put down in black and white some interesting episodes of my life and experiences. So at last, at the age of eighty-two when my eyesight is getting dim, due to cataract, I have asked a dear friend of calcutta to write as I talk.

I am born in 1875. My birth place is at Chuckerbare Road near Bhawanipore in Calcutta. My parents are convert Christians. My father had my horoscope made. My birth planet is Aries, which is the ruler of my life. It rules the head and gives good mentality, and also a tendency to headaches and nervousness. It also says that the influence of my sun sign endows me with great versatility and vivacity that should make me very popular in social circles. Many changes in my life results from the rapid movement of my ruling planet Mars. I would be always inclined to look forward to a better state of things and would give evidence of great determination, impulsiveness, execution and enthusiasm. I would have a long life and would never be in want. I would be an earnest worker and be successful in my undertakings. I am a born fighter. Reader ! From my life you will see how far this horoscope came true.

My father was Sri Ambica Charna Hazra, By embracing Christianity he was deprived of his ancestral right , though he was the eldest son. My mother, Prasanna Mayee was more or less an invalid. I am the eldest of five children and sisters. We came from a middle class family, still to be found in the Midnapore district. My parents are both dead. Of the three brothers the two eldest brothers are no more. My sister Shudhanshu Bala Hazra was a District Inspectress and afterwards became the Principal of the Ravenshaw Girls' High School. She is the first lady lawyer in India and was responsible for having amended the Legal Practitioners' Act thereby giving the right to women to practise in Courts of law. She practised in the Patna High Court for two years. But she is no more. So I am practically alone in my old age, though my

youngest brother is still alive and in Calcutta while I am in Cuttack all by myself. However, I sometimes get the companionship of my two friends–The Misses Shome–which I greatly value, and who help me as I write these reminiscences.

CHAPTER-II

"I AM THE LEADER OF BOYS"

All my life I have liked boys more than girls, men more than women. It is I feel due to my sun sign. Even as a child I liked the company of boys more than that of girls. Courage, adventure, hardships ever appealed to me. I enjoyed games, liked swimming, running, kite flying and climbing with boys. Once at a dolls wedding I officiated as priest, being dressed up like one. I chanted Mantras of my own making. It was a successful wedding since the parties spent two thousand rupees to ensure its success.

Sometimes the boys refused my company in a daring adventure, being a girl. But in the end they always gave in, my spirit of adventure being superior to their own. While coming back from the Day School, I joined the group of boys, planning the afternoon's adventure. In the adventure of helping ourselves generously from the garden of our neighbours, without their knowledge, fruits or flowers which happened to be in that season. I loved mango season the best. I used to climb up the trees like a squirrel and plucked green fruits throwing them on the heads of my younger friends.

Sometimes, we went swimming in some half a dozen tanks which were in the neighbourhood. I liked moonlight swimming best. The boys taught me various arts of swimming and encouraged me to cross the tank from end to end an easy first. I was never caught, never failed. Many a time my mother scolded me for keeping the company of boys. But I always found boys more full of spirit, undertaking and intelligence than girls. I could not resist the temptation of being with them and sharing their sports. They did nothing without consulting me. Even the bigger boys always considered me their leader and mentor. My childhood days up to the age of ten spent in the company of these dear boys were

golden days, almost all of them are no more, I am the only one left with those golden memories,

"Tis the last rose of summer
Left blooming alone."

CHAPTER-III

"I AM THE LITTLE HOUSE WIFE"

I have already mentioned that my mother was an invalid. My father's circumstances were not such as to allow him to keep a number of servants. My mother was very particular about cleanliness. On no account would she allow us to eat or drink out of any other utensils, but in special kind of refined brass, which must be cleaned till they would shine like gold. Servants would not attend to it well, so I was deputed to see to it, and often I had to do it myself. She was very fastidious about her food too, and I had to cook it often to satisfy her. I learnt cooking from my mother when I was only nine years old. I remember an incident. One day the cook did not turn up. My mother was in bed. I had two brothers. In order to give breakfast to my father at 9A.M, so that he might go to office, I entered the kitchen and started cooking. In a short time I prepared three vegaetable dishes and rice. Then proudly I placed them before my father. While he was eating with great relish I asked him "Father , how do they taste?" Smilingly he replied, "Very nice, I have never tasted such nice curries." Never before in my nine years did I feel so proud and happy as I felt when I received my father's unstinted praise. But alas; it was shortlived. When I sat down to have my meal with my brothers they refused to touch such awful stuff. When I myself tasted them one after another, I found them so badly cooked, that they were not fit to be eaten. Alas for human praise. How shortlived it is. That day I waited for my father's arrival. When he did arrive I tearfully questioned– "Father, how could you eat such awful stuff ? Why did you praise me ?" He put his hand on my head and said, "Child, it was your first effort. I know the trouble you have taken for me. I did not like to damp your spirit by telling you the truth, when I knew you would discover it in time. But to me it tasted like nectar when cooked by my little daughter out of her

great love for me. I prophesy that yor will be a splendid cook in time." At the age of twelve, when I was at Simla with my parents, and a sister was added to our family, I really became a good cook under my mother's instructions. Daily I leant to cook a new dish or sweetmeat. So even at the age of eighty two I love cooking new dishes. I myself love cleanliness. I love to see things in their proper places. From childhood onwards that habit was instilled in me. Things not in their proper places seem to make me unhappy. When I used to come back from the day school (I was compelled to give up the pleasure of roaming with the boys when I was ten years old) my great delight was to bring orderliness out of chaos. My brothers were famous for their untidiness. After that I took pleasure in sitting down mending the clothes of my little brothers. In fact the responsibility of running the household fell on my sholuder. I did not grudge it, but I considered myself the most important person in that little household. My father gave me the bazaar money and I managed things as nicely and economically as possible. Since then keeping of accounts has become a second habit with me. It saved me in after-life from utter ruin.

I was also a good nurse, looking after my baby brother an sister. I led them, I fed them, I mothered them and I put them to bed. When ill, I nursed them. To discipline them was my duty, to love them was my pleasure. Even when they were quite old they got into the habit of consulting me and asking my help in their difficulties, and I got into the habit of seeing them out of their dfficulties.

This home education fitted me well for after life. I various circumstances it helped me to stand on my feet. Her I first learnt how to save a penny by opening a Savings Bank account. I got five whole silver new rupees from my father on my twelveth birthday. Possessing so much money I felt myself rich. I went on dreaming and scheming about the wealth. At last my better judgement suggested openin of an account book in Post-Office Saving Bank by depositing rupees two. This account book is still in my possession. And the habit developed with age–my wealth accumulated.Since then every month half of my pocket money went to the Bank. Thus in future I became rich !!



ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ସ୍ଥାପିତ
ଶ୍ରୀ ମଧୁସୂଦନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତିମୂର୍ତ୍ତି

CHAPTER-IV

"I AM BEING INTRODUCED TO M.S. DAS"

Mr. Madhusudan Das and my father both studied in the L.M.S. College, Bhowanipore. They were in to the same hostel and shared the same room. Consequently they became firm friends. This lasted till their death. They embraced Christianity on the same day and in the same Church. Consquently their firendship was cemented on religious ground. When my father brought my mother from his village Hindu home she was brought to Mr. Das' house.Mr. Das was married then to a Bengali Christian lady. I was born at Mr. Das' house. Both Mr. Das and his wife took great interest in me. But as my father was in the Government of India service in the Finance Department, the friends were separated. After the death of his wife, Mr. Das left Calcutta and came back to Cuttack, his own native place.

In the year 1888 Mr. Das, after our return from Simla, came to see us. This was my second introduction to him. He at once took a great interest in me. He asked for my mother's permission to adopt me. But my mother would not give her consent. Owing to my mother's ill health he insisted that my father should take leave, come to Cuttack and stay at his house for two months. We came to Cuttack in 1889. I was very interested in his childhood's adventures and got attched to him. Finding that I was a kindred spirit he wanted to educate me. He wanted my parents' consent to send me to a boarding school in Calcutta. They readily gave their consent. From this stage I came to know Mr. Das well. After my mother's death in 1892, he brought us all to Cuttack to stay with him. My father married a second time and stayed in Simla. So we brothers and sisters stayed at Cuttack, which was our home. Mr. M.S. Das brought us all up. After I passed my I.A. Examination I was adopted by him and introduced to the public as his daughter, which enabled me to carry on with greater facility his activities for the welfare of the people of Orissa, especially in the cause of female education generally. I am thankful to God that his choice of a Bengali girl as a daughter was not in vain. Though he was criticised by many of his Oriya friends and relations in thus choosing a Bengali and not an Oriya girl, on his death bed he

expressed his satisfaction on having adopted me, for I fulfilled his expectations.

CHAPTER-V

"I AM BEING EDUCATED"

I had my elementary education in the London Mission Girl's School, but the foundation was weak, as I had to go to Simla for eight months in the year with my parents. When Mr. Das took up the question of my education he sent me to the Bethune School. I became a boarder and was admitted into the second class. The following year I passed the Entrance Examination. This year my mother died.

Mr. Das in the following year sent my sister, Shudhanshu to the Bethune School. In the fist year I had twelve fellow students. All my college friends are no more. At college I was the leader of all the girls in my class in acts of mischief. But I managed to escape punishment. It was one of the rules of the hostel that after college hours we should show our stockings then worn by us. If any holes were seen, it had to be mended then and there. One Mrs. Biswas, the Superintendent, was very particular on this point. So to thwart her, one day I told the girls that we would have a little fun out of her. I put on a pair of lace stockings. When I came for inspection the old lady who had never before seen a lace stocking complained that my pairs was full of small holes; I was asked to fill them all up. I refused to comply with her request. I was reported to the Principal. I was called and reprimanded. So I held up my stockinged foot. The Principle, an august being, feared by all, looked at it, smiled and dismissed the case.

I being a Christian girl, the Lady Principal, also a Christian, took me to task for mixing with Brahmo Girls on Sundays in the hostel. I did not pay attention to her orders, as felt the injustice of it. On Sundays I freely mixed with my Brahmo friends. Seeing this the Principal again took me to task. I told her that I did not see the justice of it, as I found there were things which I could learn from them. She was struck by my daring but could do nothing to cure me.

I came back to Cuttack as I was ill. After my illness I did not care to go back to the College so I was put into the Loreto Covent, Middleton street in Calcutta. Here I learnt many things from the good Sisters. They were very loving amd kind to me. They never tried to convert me to their religious tenets. At night when the Reverend Mother used to bless the girls with "God bless you my child, sleep well." I also knelt down to receive her blessings and felt at peace with the whole world. But I should like to record an incident here which made a deep impression on my mind. The time of University Examination drew near. It was the rule of the Convent then that each examinee should pay rupees ten towards the lighting of a candle and offering of prayers by a religious man for her success. I refused to do it on any account, as I could not believe that my success in examination depended on the intervention of another. I argued thus "Had it been true, I would not have taken so much trouble in preparing for the examination" I was willing to give even Rs.20/- towards the feeding of the poor girls, but not even one to make me pass my examination through the prayer of another. When I asked for my roll No. which was kept in the Church under the carpet, where the Father stood daily to offer mass, it was returned to me in great distress. Eneryone believed that I would be unsuccessful through this obstinacy. At the examinatian hall, I found to my dismay that questions that I had learnt so well had clean gone out of my memory, and I failed ignominiously. It left a deep impression on my mind and I left the Convent as I had no desire to court a second failure.

As my father wanted me to pass the I.A., I was sent to the Deveton College at Free School street, Calcutta. I stayed in the hostel of Young Womens Institution at Park Street. There were many European girls in the hostel but only two attended the college with me. Most of the college boys were Europeans, except half a dozen Indian boys. Amongst the boys one was from Bihar, a Mohammendan named Khaja Mohammad Noor. He was my fellow student in the college and I never expected to meet him in after life. He helped me considerably when I met him in Patna as Vice-chancellor of the University and President of the Legislative Assembly.

I enjoyed my life at Deveton with the girls and was quite free to go about as I liked. I passed my I.A. After the results were out Mr. Das

wanted me to join either the Devcton or the Convent for the B.A. But I did not care to go to any of these colleges. This time Mr. Das was ill and the doctors advised him to go to England. I made up my mind to stay at Cuttack in his house during his absence. At first he refused but in the end he gave in, stipulating that Mr. and Mrs. Anam Chandra Das and their family would stay with me during his absence. To this I readily agreed. Thus I severed my connections with Calcutta, my birthplace, and settled down in Cuttack, my adopted country.

PART - II

CHAPTER-I

LIFE IN CUTTACK : HOW I CAME TO CUTTACK

Mr. DAS owing to his illness decided to go to England for medical treatment and left for England in 1897, and with his consent I came to live in Cuttack under the guardianship of Mr. and Mrs. A. Das who lived with me in the same house. I took to gardening and furishing the house and passed time pleasantly. He had left enough money for my ligitimate wants. I thought I would give him a surprise by joining the Ravenshaw Boys' College and studing for the B.A.. I went to see the Principal of the Ravenshaw College and asked him if he would adimt me into the Third Year Class. In those days co-education was not favoured . He refused it. I went to Calcutta and saw the Director of Public Instruction of Bengal. Orissa was then under the administraton of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. I succeded in getting permission of the D.P.I. to study in the Ravenshaw College. I returned to Cuttack triumphant in being successful in the Mission. The Principal admitted me with great reluctance. I saw the science Professor who was willing to take me in his class. The Professor of Mathematics was also willing. This time I came to know Miss Isabella Samuels, whom Mr. Das had educated in the Bethuna College for I.A. As I wanted a woman to study in the college with me I persuaded her to come and join the Ravenshaw College with me. She readily consented as I promised to bear all her educational expenses. She came and lived with me in Mr. Das's house. One thing struck me when I was studying with boys that they were very well behaved and docile and would not even open their lips in our presence, but I often used to ask questions in order to clear my difficulties. During tiffin time Isabella and myself came and rested in the Principal's room. On his return Mr. Das was greatly suprised and pleased to see me studying for the B.A. with Miss Samuels. At this time I was in indifferent health. While I was sitting for my examination on the third day I completely collapsed and had to be carried away from the hall. After this I did not attempt it a second time. Though my college education practically ended here, my real education began in Mr. Das' Library. Here I met various

classes of people, heard heated discussions on religion, politics, social, industrial, educational and economic pronlems. Thus I imbibed unconsciously all Mr. Das' ideas, and enjoyed the unique privilege in my girlhood of coming in contact with a unique man.

CHAPTER-II

"RAILWAY ACTIVITIES"

(A) Journey from Calcutta to Cuttack :-

More than fifty years ago there was no direct railway communication from Calcutta to Cuttack. In 1898 B.N.R. was just beginning to start the railway bridges. Before the train service we used to come to Cuttack by seagoing vessels and steamers. The first train ran from Kolaghat to Jajpur Road Station. Passengers to Cuttack used to come to Kolaghat. It was the month of May and very hot. I was dressed very simply in a plain white sari and had on a pair of slippers. My Khansama and an ayah were travelling with me. I found four Englishmen and two English ladies travelling in the same steamer for Cuttack. The Khansama of the steamer came and asked me if I would have my lunch after or before the 'Saheblog' as they would not have lunch with me. I smiled and said I wanted no lunch. We arrived at Kolaghat where a train was waiting on the field. There was no building or proper station except a kutcha house. Seeing the mentality of the Europeans in the steamer I felt that I would have some difficulty in getting a berth in the first-class compartment. So I sent my Khansama ahead with my bedding and asking him to spread it out on a lower berth in the first-class ladies compartment. It was eleven O'clock in the morning and very hot. The train was a long way off and I asked my Ayah to follow me with my luggage and I got into my compartment before the others. In the meanwhile the Chaprasis of the European officials brought down the luggage of their masters. Seeing me in the compartment the Chaprasis said "Memsahebs would not like to travel with a native woman." Another replied "Let us wait till the Memsahibas come." In the meantime the Memsahibas arrived with their husbands. The Chaprasis told their difficulties and why they failed to put the luggage in. The gentlemen got quite red in the face and sent for the guard and asked him to turn the native woman (me) out and to tell

her to travel in the third class. The guard was more polite and had better manners than the Englishmen who happened to be officials of Cuttack. The guard came to me and asked me to show my ticket which I did. He went back to the gentlemen and told them that I was a first class passenger and he had no right to turn me out. I did not mind being called a "native woman" for I am a native woman and I am proud of it. But the way and the tone in which they uttered it seemed like an insult and I wanted to punish them. I told my Khansama to change the two third class tickets to first class and when he brought the tickets I sent for the guard and asked him to lower the upper berth of the other first class compartment where two other European gentlemen were sitting.

As this was the first train taking a trip to Jajpur Road, many Cuttack gentlemen were also travelling to Cuttack by it and also an Indian regiment bound for Mardras. They all stood in rows before the train to watch the fun and to see who won the battle-whether a lonely native woman or the Europeans.

I told my Khansama to go and sit on the upper berth of the next compartment with the Europeans. The man was reluctant to do so. I threa tened to leave him behind if he failed to take his seat. So he went and sat on the upper berth with his legs dangling down and smoking a biri. My poor Madrasi Ayah was made to sit on the opposite berth of my compartment leaving sufficient room for the ladies to share the berth with her. Seeing my activities the European gentlemen got desperate and felt their position most humiliating when watched by hundreds of natives. They asked the guard again to turn us all out and make room for the Europeans. The guard advised them to wait for the Station Master, who arrived just then. They told the Station Master to turn the native woman out who must be only a third class passenger but travelling in first class. The Station Master came to me and saw the three first class tickets. He asked me why I had changed the two servants tickets to first class. I told him how I was insulted by the Europeans and so I wanted to teach them a lesson. They would not only have to travel with a native woman but a native woman's servant, as they are servants of India. The Station Master laughed and said "Serve them right" Then the Station Master went to the Europeans gentlemen and said "Sir , they are all first class passengers and I have no right to turn them out. Please take your seats

as the train will be off in five minutes time". He then gave signal to the guard. The chaprasis were staggered to see the helpless condition of their masters and mistresses, whose pride was lowered to the dust and they were made to travel not only with a 'native woman' but with her servants.

The other passengers seeing my victory saluted and cheered me and went into their respective compartments. The two English ladies asked my Ayah to sit on the floor, My Ayah was trembling and wanted to leave her seat, but as my eyes were on her, she had to sit where she was. The European gentlemen rushed into the other compartment and sat down on the lower berth. The wife of one of the gentlemen shouted out "Alec, Alec, my dear, see the feet of the native servant dangling just above your head " Mr. Alec left his compartment and came running to our compartment. I called for the guard and asked him to turn the gentlemen out, as it was a Ladies compartment and I strongly objected his travelling in the same compartment with me. So he was turned out,

At Kharagpur the gentlemen came to their wives and told them who I was, having found it out from my servant and said that in India no one could have done what I did and I did it because I was the daughter of Mr. M.S.Das.

They left at Balasore and I came home by a steamer. I told my father what had happened. He did not approve of my putting the servants in the first class compartment. A few days after, these officers came to the Cuttack Club and they were found to be the District Magistrate and the District Judge of Cuttack, they were members of the Club. Some of the members knew about this incident and spoke to them about their rude behaviour to me. They said they did not know I was the daughter of Mr. M.S. Das and made apologies to Mr. Das for their behaviour . Since then, we became quite friendly and many a time they laughed over the incident with me and paid compliment to my courage. Thus an unhappy affair ended happily.

(B) Recovery of the Jewel box :-

I was coming from Calcutta to Cuttack, I told my brother to weigh my luggage and put some of the heavy luggage into the break van. By mistake the suitcase containing my jewel box and all my expensive saries was put into the break van. At Cuttack station I found the box was

missing from the van. There and then I created a good deal of trouble for the station staff. The Station Master sent telegrams to Kharagpur and all the other important stations. I also wrote to the Head Office saying the must be found within a week or I would claim heavy damages. My father and my friends told me that I would not get the box back but through my persistent efforts the box was at last traced at Attock station in Bombay Presidency and brought back to me within a week and I found all the contents intact. My friends said what a lucky girl I was !!

CHA PTER-III

"ENTRY INTO JAGANNATH TEMPLE"

At the beginning of this century Puri was very different from what it is now. There were hardly any houses on the beach except a few official bungalows. My father rented a house and I used to go to Puri now and then with my friends. In 1902 some friends came and stayed with me in Puri. It was the time of the Car festival and there was a gathering of a big crowd of pilgrims. The crowd was greater as this was the occasion of " Naba Kalebar" for Jagannath.

Two days previous to the Car festival my Hindu friends wanted to see the pilgrims and temple and took me with them. We arrived in front of the Sun Pillar of Jagannath at 10.30 in the morning ; several Pandas surrounded us and my friends got down and asked me to do so. I refused. The Pandas, looking at me, said " Mother, why don't you come with us ?" In reply I said "Do you know who I am ?" All of them said "Yes, you are Madhu Babu's daughter." I said " I am a Christian. How can I enter the temple for it is not allowed ?" They argued with me and persuaded me to come with them. Without giving a second thought to the matter, I went inside the circle, formed with joining of their hands, in broad daylight when I was known to the Police and the Pandas and at their request I went in. They took me inside the main temple, I felt I was doing no wrong. The priest offered me holy water and flowers, but this I refused to take and came out and stood on a platform looking at the pilgrims and listening to the solemn music and singing. Seeing me standing on the platform one Babaji of Cuttack recognised me and cried out "Madhu Babu's daughter is inside the Temple. It is polluted". The pilgrims

were enraged and some thrashed the Pandas, who came running to me and asked me to say that I was not the daughter of Madhusudan, but belonged to a doctor's family. I refused to tell such a lie and disown my father. I scolded the Pandas for having brought me there. There was great commotion and I felt very nervous and regretted having entered the Temple. I asked the Sub-Inspector of Police, who was there and whom I knew, to take me out of the Temple. He came with half a dozen policemen and brought me out of the Temple and I saw the District Magistrate and District Superintendent of Police on horse back with a dozen policemen in front of the Sun Pillar. Seeing me the District Magistrate got down and asked me "What led you to enter the Temple, Miss Das ?" I was told by him that as soon as I got inside the temple the sub-Inspector of Police ran to him and informed him of my entry. They got so nervous and worried that they came away at once, without breakfast. He also said that if the mob had killed me they would have been powerless to save my life. I did a wrong thing in entering the Temple and he did not know what consequences may follow.

In returning home I felt uneasy and sent a wire to my father to come to Puri. Next day my father and the Commissioner of Orissa arrived. In the newspaper of Calcutta it appeared that Christian ladies had entered the Jagannath Temple and had sneered and jeered at the idol and that Hindus were not safe from Christians even inside their Temple. Pilgrims were greatly infuriated and a mob rising was feared and so on. A telegram arrived from the Government of Bengal to the District Magistrate asking him what force was required to put down the riot. The officials were greatly troubled. I had a very bad time with my father and was asked by the District Magistrate to write out a report how and why I entered the Temple and what actually happened. That report was sent to the Government of Bengal.

My father went to the Raja of Puri and asked him whether he knew about my entrance into the Temple. The Raja replied "Yes, it was with my knowledge and consent your daughter was taken into the Temple. As soon as your daughter arrived at the Sun Pillar one of the Pandas ran and told me about it and asked my advice. I thought many people entered the Temple who were not supposed to do so. I therefore gave permission to your daughter to go inside the temple thinking no one would recognise

her in the crowd. Besides, she is your daughter. You saved our Temple and the honour of the family and certainly we could not say "No" to your daughter My father felt very bad on hearing this and then went to the high priest who also said "I know about your daughter's entry to the Temple for I had asked the Pandas to take her. She is your daughter. How can we say "No" to her. If she wishes to enter again, we shall allow her". My father was very much distressed, for he felt I had abused his influence and taken advantage of it.

In the local papers it was out then when the Lord of Hindustan (meaning Lord Curzon) wished to enter the Temple and promised to pay all the expenses of the repairs of the Temple, he was not granted the permission, yet a Christian girl had been allowed to go in.

The poor Pandas were fined. The Temple and Bhog were purified. Poor Jagannath had to bathe again and had fever. So there, was a few days delay in his departure to his Aunt's house.

The Car festival was put off for two days. It was a great lesson to me and since then I have never ever entered a temple or mosque not knowing what might come of it.

CHAPTER -IV

"UTKAL UNION CONFERENCE"

In 1903 my father left Congress as he found that unless the National Congress took up Orissa matters, it would not be fair for Orissa to join it. As the people of Orissa was very backward in those days and there was no national life, he started the Utkal Union Conference. The father of the present Maharaja of Mayurbhanj, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo was the President and other Feudatory Chiefs were all present. A large Executive Committee was formed and I was one of the members. The officials and non-officials of Cuttack took great interest in this . Just a week before the meeting the then Commissioner of Orissa sent round a circular asking Government officers not to join this Conference. This news staggered the members of the Executive Committee as this would prevent all the Feudatory Chiefs and Government officers from attending the Conference. The Commissioner came to see me and I being a blunt

woman always ask blunt questons. So I asked the Commissioner why he had sent round such a circular as the conference was meant to deal with Social and educational matters only and his circular would harm the Conference a great deal. He told me "You are a little girl and you must not discuss this subject with me as my lips are sealed."

After he left my house I went down to the Commitee meeting which was being held in our house and told them what the commissioner had said. My father sent a long telegram to the Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa regarding this matter. Three days after the Commissioner wanted to see my father badly. My father went to him and he showed my father a letter from the then Chief Secretary which was asked to be read out to my father. The contents were that Government was in full sympathy with the Oriya people's welfare movement and the Commissioner was asked to attend the conference. The Commissioner felt his posiion very keenly and withdrew the circular.

The great day arrived, great excitement prevailed. Three hundred college boys were made volunteers by me. I organised this volunteer movement and grouped them in different sections, we took no help from Government. Even the duties of the police were undertaken by these volunteers, who regulated the traffic also.

On the platform sat the Rajas and the Commissioner. In the middle of the pandal a "durry" was spread and my father sat down there with the scheduled caste people and the Harijans. Everyone who attended the conference has a special headgear, Pink pagri, which I took great pride in making in our house with the help of tailors.

Stirring speeches were made in Oriya. Everyone was pleased with the function and a national feeling was developed. So this pandal became the birthplace of Oriya nationalism, and it was a great success. Some editors of leading Calcutta newspapers came to the conference at my father's special invitation. They all paid compliments to my father at the signal success of the conference. In other places, the speeches, they said were all in English which the masses could not understand whereas here even the least educated could take a keen interest in the proceedings of the conference as all the speeches were in Oriya. I moved a resolution on Female Education which was supported by all. For the girls'

school I said that many of the Ranis and Rajas and other gentlemen of the town have assured me that they would help me when the school started.

The Calcutta papers called the conference "a one man's show" and congratulated the 'one man' for its signal success.

CHAPTER-V

"UTKAL YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION"

After the Utkal Union Conference I did not like to disband the volunteers' organisation which was started for the Utkal Union Conference. I found the boys were very keen in doing work for others so I formed the Utkal Young Men's Association with the volunteer boys. I felt that a healthy Association for students was very much needed to form their physical and moral character. In those days there were no debating Societies, no physical culture, and no social or cultural association and the college authorities did not make any arragement for them . There was nothing to occupy the students in their spare time.

Through the efforts of my father, the birth of the Association took place in Beharibagh, the house in which he lived when first he came to Cuttack. Two hundred students became the members. The Principal of the Ravenshaw College was the President of the Association. I was the Honorary Secretary with another professor who became Joint Secretary. All the other Professors became honorary members. I used to attened this Association daily from 4-30 to 8p.m. I arranged for extension lectures and debating classes which were taken by the Professors. Healthy newspapers were subscribed to: Tennis Badminton, Billiards, Ping-Pong and Boating were provided. Every week a lecture was given by a notable person. The Association became very popular with the guardians. Sometimes some fathers of the students asked my advice as to how a refractory boy's atention may be given to studies, or how to reform him. I took great interest in the students. The Association was called the "Students' Friend" by the public.

I feel quite proud when I think of those days spent with the students and also of my influence which helped some bad boys to pass their

examination and change their character. I cared for the welfare of the boys and they were devoted to me.

After a year I broke down in health and in 1905 I was sent to Hazaribagh for a change and left my Associaton in charge of the Joint Secretary. My father financed the Association. After a year the Joint Secretary came to my father and said it was impossible for any one of them to give so much time to the Association as I did and the result was the Association becoming less popular and it had to be wound up. The Young Men's Association thus had a premature death in 1905 and I shed tears over my baby association.

It seemed strange to many persons at the time how my father allowed me to mix so freely with the students. But my father knew I would be able to manage the students by gentleness and kindness and by showing that I cared for them. This naturally influenced their character. They all brought their troubles to me and I listened to them patiently and tried to help them. Thus I was their mother, sister, aunt and friend.

What a difference between then and now. Now the College provides all the facilities helped by Government aid, but the students have got quite out of hand. Constant strikes, taking part in unwholesome politics. dictating terms to elders and superiors seem to be the present day enjoyments of the boys. This is due, I believe, in their taking part in the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. It seems difficult now to bring them under healthy control.

CHAPTER - VI

"TRIP TO ENGLAND"

In 1906 the Government of Bengal which was also the Government of Orissa were sending two women (one of them was my college friend) to England for training as teacher . I made up my mind to go with them and study at the Maria Grey Training College in London with them. Doctors advised my father send to me London to recoup my health. Thus I went to England with the two students Saralabala Mittra and Miss Fatima Fygee sent by Government and we all arrived in London on the 17th of September 1906 and were met at the station by one Miss

Beck–Secretary, Indian Women's Association. I shall never forget the evening when I reached the Maria grey Training College, Everything seemed dark and dull and cheerless compared with sunny land of India and we three lay down on our beds and wept like children as we entered our rooms in the Maria Grey Training hostel. However I made up my mind to stay with the students and make the best of it and prosecute my studies. Here I got a friend whose name was Miss Mary Marshel. She is an M.A. of Oxford, and as long as she lived she carried on correspondence with me, even after I left England. In the appendix I give some of the extracts of my father's letters which were written to me in England . He took great interest in my studies ad my health. Each letter is a gem and my student friends in England thought that I must be proud of having such a father who could write such letters to his daughter.

But my health gave way and my guardians Lady Elliot, wife of late it. Governor of Bengal and Lady Spicer sent me to the Isle of Wight in Ventor where I went to a Nursing Home called "Hygia". It was a rest cure and I was fed like a pig and gained a stone in weight in two weeks. But such feeding needs special digestive powers which I lacked and so I got ill again and had to leave the Nursing Home and came to London. After I returned from the Nursing home in the Isle of wight, my guardians thought that it would be better for my health to stay outside London and they selected Cambridge for me. Here I went to a Women's Training College. I was put in a friend's house as a paying guest in Jesus Lane. Here I met two Japanese lady students. They were sent by their Government for training, I found that the ladies were not at all emotional. One of these ladies lost her father while she was coming out in the steamer, and the news came to her by radio. But she controlled herself so well that no one in the steamer knew anything about it. We often used to compare notes about our trespective countries, customs, dress education, government and other topics. I joined the Women's Training College and one of them joined with me. In the College there were about thirty graduate students from London, Newham and Girton. I being the first Indian Lady they met, they were very kind and helpful. As it was very cold in the month of January and February, the Lady Principal did not give me any duties to give lesson to schools outside – though each student is required to give two such lessons each week. My turn came in the spring. It came to me like a bombshell, for I had never taught before.

Giving lessons to boys and girls of a Country Council School was not an easy matter. I was to give a lesson to a class of 60 boys and girls from ten to fourteen. I found that my fellow students who had more experience, complained that their lesson was a failure as they could neither maintain discipline in the class nor rouse the interest of their puplis. After having heard their complaint daily I felt that I too would prove a failure. I was asked to give lessons on Indian History and English . The great day arrived, I went to the country council school where 60 pairs of eyes were on me. My Lady Principal Lecturer and the Head Mistress of the School were sitting with note books in their hands. I felt nervous for a moment but in order to attract my pupils I was dressed prettily in a coloured sari. Those children had never seen an Indian Lady before. So it was a novelty to them to see an Indian Lady who could talk to them in their own language. But because of these novelties, the children were so quiet that you could hear a pin fall. I finished my lesson in an atmosphere of rapt attention and interest for 45 minutes. After the lesson I asked questions and every one eagerly responded with hardly a mistake. My first trial was over in 45 minutes and I left the school room, not knowing what sort of adverse criticism was in store for me from my Principal and Lecturer. In the evening I was sent for to hear criticisms from my Lecturer, and would you believe my readers that the first sentence that greeted my ears was –"Miss Das, you said that you never taught anybody. But we found you are a born teacher. Your class management was perfect and you kept up the attention and interest of your class all through. I congratulate you" This encouraged me to do even better for my pupils and I did manage to get along with my work very well. So you see my dark colour and my dress did more for me than the learning and erudition in others. After a year, I passed two examinations and I was sent back to India in the winter of 1907. My father went to England to bring me back. The Principal of the training college and my guardians arranged that I should return to England the following year and pass the final examination, but circumstances kept me in my own province to do Education work which I shall narrate hereafter.

Presentation at Buckingham Palace :–

Before I returned to India – in the winter of 1907 my guardian, Lady Spicer, decided to take steps to have me presented at their

Majesties–King Edward and Queen Alexandra's Court. No Indian could be presented unless the Indian Office was satisfied regarding his or her social status and other qualifications. In my case India office found out all about me from India Government and gave permission for my presentation at the first Court in March 1907.

I found that the British Court is very exclusive about receiving people from other countries and through enquiries are made concerning women who are to be presented and if after such enquiries, the Court officials are satisfied, the permission is granted. It is a great thing even for well-connected ladies in England to be presented at St. James' and any lady who has been so presented at their Majesties Court, has entry to all the highest places and courts of Europe and other Societies that count in the world, and such a person also gets the privilege of being presented to His Holiness, The Pope, and gains private entry to the Viceregal Lodge in India.

It is enough credential for a hostess to know that a lady has been presented. Invitaion cards pour in for her from different places for different Society functions and also to country houses of ancient Lords. It is as if by a magic wand all the doors of the best houses are open to her, even if she were a total stranger. Such is the importance and honour of being presented at a British court.

Rich women all over the world seek to enter this magic circle and all the leading hostesses in London are sought after every year to help rich women to be presented. In many cases large sums of money or presents are given to Society hostesses for this purpose and in many cases even money – which is power – has failed to open the doors of the British Court. I did not seek for presentation neither did I understand its value, but as my guardian desired it, I fell in with her wish.

The preparation of my Court dress was a matter of great importance to the Indian office. Lady Curzon-Wyllie, the wife of the then Aide-de-camp of the Secretary of State for India was instructed to see that I appeared before Their Majesties in accordance with the circular of the Court Regulation regarding the presentation dress. When I was taken by my guardian to Liberty's the most fashionable shop in London for Court dress, a real battle began with my guardian. I was not ready to appear before Their Majesties in borrowed plumes–English Court dress– I plainly

made it clear that I would not appear in any other dress but my national costume–Sari. A great commotion was started in the India Office and with the Lord Chamberlain in Buckingham Palace, as Sari was not a Court dress and there was no precedent of any British subject ever being presented in their national costume. I was the first British subject to be so presented. I was more than once asked by Lady Wyllie to follow the court fromalities and the prescribed etiquette but I firmly told her that I would appear as a British subject in my national costume. If that he denied to me owing to the strict formalities of the Court, I would forego the honour and the pleasure of being presented. As the India office and the Court authorities wished to see me presented and found me so determined in the matter of my dress and salutation, all Court formalities were waived and I was allowed to presented dressed in a Sarie and made my 'Pranam' to Their Majesties. I did not wear any glove or carry a bouquet. I was the solitary exception in this in March, 1907, the first Court of the season.

The great day arrived and it was bitterly cold I went to Buckingham Palace with my guardian Lady Spicer and Sir Albert and were shown to the first Ball Room which was already crowded with ladies. Their dresses and Jewelleries were magnificient. The whole ball room looked like a fairy-land. Two golden thrones were placed on a little dias. Golden galleries ran to the left of the room. Red carpets were placed on the floor and chandeliers were sparkling along with the jewels of the ladies. I was admiring the beautiful scene all around me. The ladies were admiring my sarie and I was admiring their dress and jewels. So we were a mutual admiration society. I was told by the Duchess of Devonshire that when making my saluation, I should look up to the Queen, When my name was called by the Lord Chamberlain, I walked straight on and then went into a right hand side room where two pages were waiting whose duty it was to roll and unroll the train of the dress of those to be presented. When they saw me they smiled as they had no duty with me. I came into the Ball Room, walking slowly, where Their Majesties were seated on the thrones– the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children were just behind. Their Majesties. The whole Ball Room was so quiet that one could hear even a whisper. I walked first to the throne of the king. All eyes were on me and I felt nervous, but I bowed my head and with

folded hands I made my 'Pranam', then I walked a few steps and did the same to the Queen and looked up to her. I had the greatest distinction of receiving a smile from Her Majestey. The two pairs of eyes met– the Queen and her subject– and the Queen most graciously accepted the homage of her Indian subject.

After my presentation, when I was leaving the Ball Room, I was told by the Aide-de-Camp of the Royal household that he had a message from the Lord Chamberlain who told me "If you like to remain in the Court room and participate in the function like the other members of the Royal family and Royal guests, you can do so". Lady Spicer asked me to remain as it was a great honour shown to me to be allowed to remain in the room with the Royal family. I was then given a seat among the Royal family and guests.

After the function was over, the Lord Chamberlain brought me to the supper room and took me to my guardian where the secretary of State for India and other high officials and ladies were present, I was introduced to many and congratulated on having such honour and privileges at the Court such as had not been shown to any lady before.

The London papers and continental Journals featured largely my Court dress and the novel way of my salutation. From America and several countries in Europe. I got congratulatory letters. My presentation and my national dress have since then created a precedence for other Indian ladies to be presented in a sarie. I made the sarie to be recognised as a Court dress and pranam as a form of salutation, through my strong determination verging on obstinacy. Thus you will see when I was in London for study, I made myself well known by the above mentioned incident and I was covered with invitations and enjoyed being the guest of many Lords and Ladies in their ancestral country houses. I also had the privilege of having an interview with His Holiness, the Pope. During my stay in London, after my presentation to their majesties' Court as I mentioned before, all doors of the upper ten were opened to me. Presentation has a charm like a magic wand. It gets you anywhere and everywhere. Thus I was invited in the old country house of the Duchess of Devonshire to spend a week-end. It was some miles out of London. I was received very warmly by my hostess, after lunch she showed me round and pointed out to me some century old beams in which they take

great pride. Next morning she took me round the village. It was springtime, woods were lovely and daffodils were everywhere and I plucked many. I was taken to a village carpenter's shop which reminded me of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." Then she took me to a village school where little tots from three up to girls of ten were, there. I was asked by the Duchess to say a few words to them I had come from India to England to learn from them. The children were very pleased to hear this. After this a tiny tot of four was put on the table by the form mistress and he sweetly said to me "Miss Das, give our love to your little children"

I enjoyed my weekend very much and returned to London happy.

(b) Activities and Impressions :–

A High Court Judge of Calcutta who was on the same boat with us on my way to England was curious to know what my first impressions about England would be. I promised to let him know after I had been there for sometime. Later on I was asked to lunch at his place and I told him that I was impressed by the English people at home. He was surprised to hear this for he had thought the big shops and other attractions of London would impress me more. He asked me "Hadn't you met English people in India" ? I said "I had met hundreds" but asked him "Were English people in England the same as English people in India ? Their behaviour to us there is quite different from their behaviour in England. English people in England met us on equal terms and helped us in a friendly way. Even the organ grinder and cart driver had a sympathetic word and a friendly smile for us." He kept quiet.

I was in Cambridge as a paying guest in a lady's house. When I arrived there she was very busy writing letters and asked me to wait a few minutes. When she had finished she ran out to catch the last post. When she returned from the post she explained to me that once a year a boat goes out to a distant island–whose name I have now forgotten–where the people come running to meet the boat for letters. This lady had directed her letter to any lonely man or woman who had received no letter, so that he or she might feel there were people thinking of them wishing them well.

What a kindly thought; would we in India have done a thing like that I wondered !!

I was the guest in the house of a nobleman. On Monday morning the hostess asked me what my plans were for the day. She said they were all going out to the country for the day and I could either join them or go elsewhere if I so desired. She explained that her maid was going to be married that day and would have her wedding reception in this house. All the silver things and dishes were put out for the use of the wedding party. The whole house would be at the disposal of the maid and her friends the whole day, the mistress and her family returning late in the evening after the whole affair was over.

It is such a unique thing it seemed to me such generosity, such kind and sympathetic treatment of a servant would indeed be rare anywhere. It gave me new ideas and thoughts and my impression of such people as these was both pleasing and instructive.

When we three Indian ladies first arrived in London, the Indian office had sent their lady representative to meet us at Victoria Station. But an old lady of 75 had heard about us somehow and had come all the way from Surrey in the cold and inclement weather to give a warm welcome to us to her own country, that we may not feel lonely and homesick on arrival.

This needs no comment.

I was a guest in Lady Spicer's house. On Sunday after lunch we were sitting and talking, After a little while the host excused himself saying he had an important engagement then and would resume the talk after dinner. It transpired that Sir Albert had promised his little girl of 2 1/2 years to take her to Hyde Park so that she could feed the swallows with bread crumbs. Sir Albert was punctual to the minute and considered his engagement to give a little pleasure to his little girl as important as an engagement in his office or in Parliament. We do not have such notions about all our engagements and would think nothing of keeping a child or an important person waiting or even forgetting all about such engagements.

Some incidents however made very bad impressions on my mind. For instance, in London I found in a gin shop a poor woman buying a penny worth of gin and giving it to her baby to keep her quiet while she enjoyed herself in her own way by drinking. Such sights are uncommon in India and it was very repugnant to me.

Sunday evening at Hyde Park did not impress me favourably that men and women in a Christian country could behave in such an unseemly and shocking manner, seemed very repugnant to me coming from a non-Christian country. This also left a very bad impression on my mind.

Many a time I was asked to say a few words about India and Indian women in drawing rooms. Sometimes a foolish question about the unhappiness of our women had to be met and explained. I had to explain to my audience that the standard of happiness differed in different places and countries. The drawing room talks in London and discussion in country houses were interesting and instructive as I could in this way clear many wrong ideas about my country and could give much useful information.

Here I will narrate an incident which will show you what a wrong impression English ladies had about Indian women. Sir Charles Elliot and Lady Elliot used to keep an open house for Indian students who wanted to drop in for tea or lunch twice a month. But very few Indian students went there. He had a beautiful house, and the garden full of roses and other flowers. One Saturday I was asked to lunch by Lady Elliot. The Duchess of Devonshire was there. I had a seat next to her at table. Lady Elliot said, "Duchess you love to hear about Indian women. Here is Miss Das, she will give you first hand information." She looked at me and said that she was told that Indian Women loved jewelleries very much. "Is it a fact ?" she asked. I said "Duchess, I shall tell you what I have seen among English ladies, also among Indian ladies and then you can judge for yourself " I began by saying that here I find in the spring time invitations for garden parties were sent round. Ladies rush to the shops day after day to select fabrics for their garden frocks to suit their colour. Then patterns of Paris frocks are inspected. After a great deal of discussion with the dressmaker, the pattern is selected then comes selection of shoes, stockings, bags, parasols, etc., to match the frock and the complexion. When the special day comes, they spend hours on make up and hairdressing and one finds such beauties at the party that one falls in love with them. Old and middle aged women, look like young girls.

Whereas in India, the invitation for dinner or garden party or any party comes only about a week before the function. No one rushes to shops, any colour of the rainbow suits the dark complexion of the Indian ladies. They have many saries of all colours and on the day of the function

they select one of them and hardly take half an hour to put it on. As regards jewellery, it is a fact that Indian ladies–those who can afford it make heavy gold jewelleries they have them. They serve two purposes– they are ornaments and they are also a sort of investment to be used when in difficulty about money. With these they deck themselves on ceremonial occasions without giving much thought or time to their selection. Whereas Duchess, I said : "I find in the Strand and Piccadilly jewellery shops full of false diamonds and pearls which are so attractive, but which no Indian lady would like to wear : Yet these shops would not have existed if English ladies had not patronised them. Therefore I leave you to judge who like glitter and glamour and spend their time, thought and money over personal embellishment." My hostess then addressed the Duchess and said "Now I hope you are satisfied" she turned to me and said "I am very glad you have put things so well."

My gentle readers, I am not speaking of the present day ladies who are trying to imitate Western modes and fashions in dress, make-up etc., for my story is about half a century ago.

I loved to spend week-ends in real Christian homes. It was a pleasure to see the home-life. It was most instructive too. Sir Albert Spicer was a middle class man, with an income of about 3 or 4 lacs a year. He was an M.P, the Treasurer of the London Missionary Society and was in several business firms. He had thirteen children. Lady Spicer, though a Society woman, looked after the children well. One Sunday, while we were at breakfast, a little girl of his, aged six years, went up to her and said "Mummy darling, will you buy my chocolate box ? I have used up all my pocket money in buying this box. It was so lovely I could not resist the temptation of buying it, and forgot all about the subscription to be given to my Sunday School today for Indian children. I have no money to give, so please do buy my chocolate box." The mother looked at the child with love and kindness but said firmly "You should have thought twice before using up all your pocket money like this. I shall buy your box this time, but never again must you do such a careless thing." "Thank you, Mummy" she said, and ran upstairs to fetch the box down. The mother took the box from her and gave the child 2s, 6d. The child was very happy– that she would be able now to give money for Indian children.

One morning while staying at the Spicers', at the breakfast table, this little girl was a little late in coming down to the table. She and her sister, a year older than her, went to a school a mile away. They generally walked, as their mother never paid for bus hire as she thought it was a good exercise for the children. It was a cold winter morning, and in spite of being wakened in time by the nurse, the child did not like to leave her warm cosy bed for a cold dip and dressing. Therefore she was late for breakfast. The mother said "Child you are late to-day and you will be late for your school. How will you reach there in time ? "Mummy, it is so cold," the child said" that I did not get up so early for a cold bath. I'll go in the bus and forego my chockie to-day" she looked quite happy and did not mind foregoing the chocolate. I, with wonder and surprise looked on thinking "What a mother ! Couldn't she give an extra penny to the child for chocolate ? What a difference, I thought, from our Indian mothers !

My father came to England in June 1907, to take me back to India. He asked me whether I would stay in a hostel or take a house. I said that I would like to have a house, do housekeeping and invite my friends. We had a beautiful house at Southerland Avenue, engaged half a dozen servants and a housekeeper. My father took his Mohammadan servant with him, who could not talk English. When he wished to say anything he would make signs and stare with his big eyes, which frightened the maids. He would also sit down on the floor. I had invited some of my friends and some MPs. who were kind to me and in whose houses I had been a guest. The day previous to the dinner party, in the morning, I was going out of London for the whole day, the housekeeper came and told me that all the servants had given notice to leave that day and she brought the account book and the money and one week's salary of the servants as they were leaving without notice. I told her I would look into the matter next day and left the house. When I returned in the evening, except the butler, everyone had left. Now to stay in a London house without a cook, especially when one was expecting important guests to dinner was a great dilemma for me. I was told by the butler that the servants left owing to our Mohammedan servant whose ways they did not like. My father asked me either to cancel the dinner party or to ask them to a fashionable hotel. I said "No father. I would entertain them in my own house." London is a place where you can do things in the twinkling of an

eye if one spends money." I got a very good cook from the servants' bureau and two waiters from a hotel. Everything was in tiptop condition when the guests arrived, the first dinner party was a great success. I was congratulated by the ladies in having such good servants, when they heard the whole story they were surprised and paid me compliments. Thus the tragedy of a dinner party ended happily. And the batch of servants I engaged again proved efficient and the butler wanted the hookah of my father when he left London to show his efficiency to other big Indians who would engage him. I liked English servants better than our own servants for their punctuality and efficiency. If you treat them with kindness they proved a great success. They would go out of their way to please you. But our Anglo-Indian friends after their retirement from service cannot get on well with them owing to their overbearing nature. Many of my Anglo-Indian lady friends have told me of their grievances regarding servants.

I could write a volume of all the interesting things I saw in England but I do not want my book to be bulky. So here I end my London impressions.

CHAPTER-VII

"RETURN TO CUTTACK"

Educational Activities.

(a) Ravenshaw Girls' School :-

As previously mentioned my father went to England and brought me home in the autumn of 1907. I fully expected to return to England in the spring of 1908, but that wish was not fulfilled.

On my return I was asked by the then D.P.I. of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to start Girls' High Education in Cuttack with the assurance that the Government would help me. Instead of starting a new school my father asked me to improve the existing Ravenshaw Girls' School which was then only a Lower Primary School. I agreed and put my whole heart and soul to reorganize that school and make it a high school and a popular institution. It was uphill work. The education of girls, except up to the Upper Primary was almost nil. Neither the guardians nor the people

nor the Government was interested in Oriya girls' higher education. I had to fight against great odds. The Missionaries, the officials and a great section of the public were not in favour of my starting a Girl's High School. The niece of the then Inspector of Schools, Orissa, had started a Girl's High School in Cuttack during my absence in England, with Bengali girls, mostly of Calcutta and had the good fortune of being favoured by the officials. But I made up my mind to work in spite of all difficulties and make this school the first High School in Cuttack.

I took up the school with 15 girls on the rolls on 8th of February 1908 and increased the number to 300 in 1909. The Government promised to support me and give a grant equal to the amount I would raise. I undertook to finance the school and raised Rs. 500/- a month and demanded Rs.450/- grant a month from Government and I was the Lady Principal and Honorary Secretary. The dispute between myself and the local authorities was so great regarding the status of the school and its finance, that the D.P.I. of Bengal had to come to Cuttack and decided the question by a visit to my school. His visit was a great help. He was so pleased to see the improvement that he decided to give me a grant of Rs. 450/- a month which I received in 1908, and stopped the grant of the other school favoured by the officials and the Inspectress of Schools, as he found that the Government would not be justified in giving a grant for education of girls who come from outside of Orissa as the school was primarily meant for the education of the girls of the province. This naturally made me unpopular with the local officials. I did not mind this at all as long as I had the support of Government. I was asked by the Government to form a Managing Committee and send the names to the District Magistrate for approval and through his recommendation, under grant-in-aid rules, the school would receive the promised grant of Rs.450/- a month from the year 1909. The local officials were most revengeful and you will see here through what difficulties I had to pass to carry on my school and make it a success. When I sent the names of the members the District Magistrate removed all the names and put in new names of his own selection. Under the rule of the Education Code the District Magistrate had no powers to select members but only to approve, the right of selection naturally was given to the Secretary of the School. I refused to have his nominees and he would not recommend me to the

Government for the grant and so I did not get any grant from the Government for nearly 10 months in the year 1909. I had to manage the school with great difficulty. Had it not been for my father who paid the establishment bills of the school I would have been obliged to close the school as the monthly expenditure was Rs.1000/-. One day I heard that His Honour the then Lt. Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Sir E. Baker would visit Cuttack. I went to the then Commissioner of the Division and asked him to include in the programme. His Honour's visit to my school. He refused saying "His Honour's time was all filled up and it would not be possible to have him even for ten minutes." I felt disappointed but my spirit was not damped. I made up my mind to see his Honour's private Secretary without any appointment and request him myself to ask His Honours to visit the first Girl's High School in Orissa. His Honour came to the Cuttack Circuit House one morning in April, 1909. I went in the evening from the Cuttack Club to the Circuit House. I wanted to see the Private Secretary of His Honour. When I opened the gate I found a short thin old man walking in the garden. Seeing me he came towards me and asked me whom I wanted to see. I said "I wanted to see the private Secretary." He said 'I am sorry, he is out,' 'Can I not do anything for you ?' I asked him "Will you kindly take a message to the Private Secretary ?" He said 'I shall be glad to do anything you wish me to do.' He then took me inside the house. When I was in his drawing room, he asked me to give him the message. I told him that the first Girls' High School had been started here by me. The girls and the parents are eagerly expecting a visit from His Honour. Now they will be disappointed as His Honour would not be able to pay any visit for want of time. He asked "Have you been to the Commissioner to ask him to put His Honour in the programme" I replied "Yes." He asked me "What did he say ?" I replied "The Commissioner said that His Honour's programme was full and he would not be able to visit our school." He said "His Honour will see your school and without seeing it he will not leave Cuttack. I assure you." Then he said "Good evening Miss Das." I came to know there that I was talking to His Honour and I was surprised to know how His Honour came to know my name. I went back to the Club. The Government House peon came and delivered a note to the Commissioner. The Commissioner left the Club followed by the chaprassi. I knew why he was sent for and wished to know the developments. The Commissioner

returned after a few minutes and seeing me at the Club, he told me that His Honour would like to see my school. Would 7 O'clock in the morning suit me to receive him at the School. I smiled and said "It will suit me very well, thank you for the arrangement" Again he said "Are you sure it is not too early ? Will you be able to bring all the girls to the school ?" I said I will work the whole night to bring all the girls so please do not worry." The Commissioner did not like the idea at all. He thought that I might inform His Honour about all my difficulties in not getting the Government grant, so his visit to my school should be prevented. His Honour visited the school and was very pleased and asked me repeatedly if I required any help from him. I answered him in the negative. There were inside the school premises two or three Hackney carriages and the horses bad made a mess of the place. The Commissioner turned to me and said "Miss Das, you should not have kept the Hackney carriages there knowing His Honour's visit." I replied in the presence of His Honour "You know under what difficulties I am working unaided, when I requested you to put His Honours' visit to the school on the programme, you did not grant my prayer. Late last night you informed me of His Honour's visit to my school and you gave me such short notice that I had to bring the children to the school at 4 O'clock in the morning from their beds. As there is no carriage stand here I was obliged to keep the carriages in the school compound, so that after His Honour's visit I can send the girls home immediately. I am sorry that even for His Honour's visit I could not do otherwise." His Honour turned towards me, he had heard everything that I said and put a hand over my shoulder and said "It is quite all right Miss Das I am not displeased." The visit of His Honour was a landmark in the history of the school and it was the talk of the town how I had won a victory over the Commissioner.

As I did not get any grant without accepting the District Magistrate's nominees for forming my committee, I went to see His Honour at Darjee-ling. I was invited to lunch and I was asked at the table by His Honour how my school was getting on. I said "Not at all well." He asked "Why ?" I replied, "Your officials are creating trouble for me" and then I told him the whole story how I would not and could not accept the District Magistrate's nominees. He laughed and asked if I went to the Commissioner and asked him to help me. I said 'Yes.'

"What did he say ?" he asked me. I was then quite excited forgetting that I was at the Government House lunching with his Honour. My father sitting on the opposite side winking at me so that I may not say anything further. I did not pay attention to it but said "Sir, when a civilian makes a mistake even when he knows it, he does not like to admit it for the loss of prestige and his brother civilians support him in his mistake, therefore the Commissioner supported the District Magistrate. He asked "What reply did you give to the District Magistrate regarding his nominations ?" I replied that I wrote that his power was limited under the Education Code and that he could only approve and not select. And as I will not accept his nominee he and the Commissioner will not help me and thus I cannot get the Government grant without their recommendation and I do not know what to do : your rights Miss Das and your Lt. Governor will see you through : Now tell me what you want." I said "Without any interference of the District Officials and forming any Committee I want the Government to give me grant on my personal guarantee. I want Rs. 500/- p.m. as recurring grant." He said "Both of these will be given to you." And so this is the second victory over the Commissioner. I managed my school well and that same year I sent up a girl for the matriculation examination. She passed in the 3rd Division. I asked the Education Department to give her a scholarship to prosecute her studies, for the I.A. examination at Calcutta. My request was rejected as my school was not recognised by the Calcutta University. I wrote to the member of the Executive Council holding the education portfolio, explaining why it was essential to give a scholarship to the first Oriya girl even though the school was not recognised by the University. The girls must be encouraged for the higher education. The effect of this letter was that the girl got a scholarship of Rs. 10/- per month. Then I approached the Calcutta University and requested them to recognise my school as a High School though there were not even 4 girls in the first two top classes. All the girls were in the 4th class studying the first book in English. So whoever used to come to visit the School wondered how I could manage to get what I wanted.

In those days when no one heard of girl's higher education one girl passing the Matric Examination was considered a wonder. However the University recognised my school as a High School. I worked for five

years as Hony worker and during this time the school became a real Girl's High School. I asked the Government to take up the school under their management. The D.P.I. inspected it and wrote in the Visitors Book that this is a really successful attempt in female education in Orissa and Government was willing to take it up. I handed over my school to Government on 1st March 1913 in a most flourishing condition. Since then the school has improved greatly. And I am proud to say that this school is a nucleus for the first Women's College in Orissa and it has been named by Government "Shoilabala Women's College" in recognition of my past services.

(b) Education Conference at Ranchi :–

In 1914 I was invited by Government to attend the Female Education Conference at Ranchi. The Conference was held for a week and I took some part in the discussions and my views were accepted. Through my efforts Government created a scholarship for a graduate lady to be trained in England. Government sanctioned a scholarship of £250 a year for two years. The Biharee members who attended the Conference opposed me saying it was not necessary to send a girl to England as girls were not yet ready to go to England. But I gained my point and Miss Nirmala Bala Nayak who was a graduate and was ready to go to England, got the scholarship. She became the Lady Principal of Ravenshaw Girls' School later on.

Encouraged by this success I brought up a resolution that Indian ladies should get the post of an Inspectress of Schools, I spoke about this resolution to the Chief Secretary and the D. P. I. They felt I would get no support from the members of the Conference as there were no ladies qualified for such a job. I strongly differed from their views and I challenged them saying that inspite of their opposition, I would gain my point. They said they would be glad to hear me speak and abuse Government, but nevertheless I would not get any votes. This conversation was carried on in a friendly atmosphere. I could not sleep that night thinking what I should do to gain my point. Towards morning my brain became clear and I felt sure of success inspite of all opposition. I arrived at the Conference and had to move my resolution first. All eyes were on me with a twinkle in them. The Biharees were surprised at my boldness. I first attacked the D.P.I. asking for the requisite qualifications for the

post of the Inspectresses of Schools. Then I pointed out that the Inspectresses who were sent out to India were women with only third class qualifications and they had great difficulty in examining schools as they had no knowledge of the language, custom and manners of the people, whereas an Indian lady would have first class qualifications, and will be of good birth, and also know the language, manners and customs of the people with whom she was dealing. Moreover, she would not have *"an inherent hatred for the coloured race."*

After throwing this bombshell I sat down. The whole conference was taken by surprise by my bold speech and they all kept silent for two or three minutes. Then the President said in a serious voice. "It is to be regretted very much that Miss Das had occasion to pass this remark, but she is justified in asking for the post of the Inspectress of Schools to be given to an Indian lady. The sanction must be got from the Secretary of State for India." Thus I won my point. Whether I was right or wrong in this I leave my readers to judge, but anything is fair in love or war.

The D.P. I. and the Chief Secretary said to me "We did not know you would throw such a bombshell to pass that resolution. Now tell us who made that remark ?" I told them "You were all present on the occasion when an Englishman made this remark and so there is no necessity to mention names." It was a D.P. I. who had made that remark on the eve of his retirement at the Ranchi Government House dinner party. At Governor's request this remark never came out in the press. I knew it from a person who was present at the dinner party,

(c) Hindu Widows Training School :–

When working for the Ravenshaw Girls' High School, I felt the necessity for starting a Hindu Widows Training School to get trained teachers for High Schools. In Orissa, there were many Hindu Widows. I got half a dozen Hindu Widows who were willing to be trained. I prepared the scheme and sent it to the D.P.I., but it did not meet with his approval. I was determined to have the Training School. For three years I persistently fought for it. The heads of departments and other officials, knowing my past activities would not support my

In 1920 Sir Edward Gait, the last Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa before the Reform, came to Puri. I saw him at Government House and asked him why Government censured my past work. He was surprised

and said Government appreciated my work very much and was willing to recognise my services suitably by giving me Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal, which I had refused. So there was no censure on my activities by Government. I then said that I wished to start a Hindu Widows Training School, but the Education Department would not give me further opportunities to serve my country. He asked me whether I had any correspondence on the subject. I gave him the required papers, which he looked through and said he would return them after a week. I do not know what transpired when he went back to Ranchi, but I got a letter from the then D.P.I. that he was coming to Cuttack to see me in connection with the Training School. We met and discussed the scheme with the result that Government accepted the scheme and a Hindu Widows' Training School was started and I was offered the salaried post of the Lady Principal which I declined, but offered my honorary services which could not be accepted under the rules. So another Principal was appointed and the Training School went on successfully.

CHAPTER VII

(d) All India Women's Conference :–

The All India Women's Conference gradually became quite a forceful organization and it started its constituencies in almost each and every Province. I was asked by the Standing Committee to start a constituency in Orissa. I did this and got hundred members. I became a Standing Committee Member from Orissa and started branches in Puri and Balasore. Every year, before the annual session of the A.I.W.C. we had our Orissa Constituency annual meeting and passed many valuable resolutions many of which were given effect to by the local Government. We elected delegates. The Provincial quota was ten. The full quota of delegates could not attend but some attended the All India Women's Conference wherever it was held.

I fought a great deal with the Government and got Travelling and Halting allowances for two delegates and sent an educationist to attend the Conference. The importance of attending these meetings was realised by the Government. In those days women's representation to various Bodies was almost nil. Through the efforts and activities of this

Conference, Government first appointed Women Jail visitors, Hospital visitors and members of other Educational Bodies and I was appointed to most of these. We did a work of great importance by stopping the drugging of children by servants, by giving them small doses of opium. We passed resolution to stop this practice and made various resolutions asking for the control of the sale of opium. Ultimately Government helped us by making laws whereby the sale of opium to servants was stopped and thus the poor little children were saved. In those days Government was sympathetic to our Women's movements and when they found a band of educated women, doing educational and social work, they always helped and encouraged them. What a difference now under our Congress Party Government, unless a woman is a member of the Congress, however efficient a worker she may be, all doors to social and educational work are closed to her. This educational and social conference made us women come in contact with various kinds and classes of women in other Provinces. And this helped us to gain many experiences and broadened our outlook.

As long as I was a Standing Committee member, I used to take most of the delegates to Conference meetings. After I left Cuttack in 1921, others took my place, but the work suffered, with the result that this Constituent branch existed in name only. The old working members left and the women who took their place did no real work, though they enjoyed the privilege of attending Conferences, free of cost to themselves. Thus the constituent branch of the A.I.W.C. which did such useful work at one time was in a moribund condition for sometime, but now it is completely dead. It is a pity that the women of Orissa are not in touch with the A.I.W.C. which is rendering so much service to the country.

CHAPTER –IV

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

(a) First Woman Honorary Magistrate in India :–

It is interesting to know that though Orissa in 1924 was backward in many respects to other Provinces in India, yet in some question of women's uplift movements, she has given a lead to India.

The credit is due, I am proud to acknowledge to a woman of Orissa.

One day in 1925 I read in some newspaper about women. Honorary Magistrates of Madras and Bombay. I did not know at that time that they were only Justices of Peace and had no actual power to try any case. I said to myself "why should not our Province have an Honorary Magistrate ?" To think was to act. I at once saw late Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha– the then Finance and Judicial Member of the Executive Council of the Government of Bihar and Orissa in connection with the question of Honorary Magistrate. He asked me, "Do you wish to be an Honorary Magistrate, if so, I can make you a real one." I said, Certainly, I would like to be the first honorary woman Magistrate in India. I was appointed in 1925. I ranked in equal status with the stipendiary Magistrates in Patna. I first had third class power and after six months of my appointment I enjoyed the power of a second class Magistrate- and tried all cases which are tried by a second class Magistrate. I refused to sit with any man stipendiary Magistrate from the beginning to learn work, so I sat singly. I had a court room furnished, a retiring and a bathroom. A clock was put up on the wall of my room. I had a Bench-clerk and a Chaprasi. Some months I worked 22 days for four hours a day, when second class Magistrates were on leave. In one year I tried 575 cases dealt with Indian Penal Code and District Board, Municipality, Railway, Motor Vehicle, Police and other By-law cases. 50% of my judgments were upheld in the Patna High Court and 25% of my judgments were modified and 25% in I.P.C. cases were set aside. I worked like a stipendiary Magistrate, to show to Government that a woman was also capable of doing executive services just as well as a man. Even when I had 3rd class power, I tried the cases of juvenile offenders by the order of the District Magistrate, that was the privilege I enjoyed from the very beginning of my appointment.

The first day when I look my seat in the Court, I felt quite an important person seeing that lawyers were in my court. I did not feel nervous or show my ignorance in law. I was determined to learn from them in trying By-law cases. I found that poor people were often prosecuted, whereas the gentry escaped from being punished. I asked the prosecuting officer one day, "How is it that poor men are always

prosecuted ? Do not the rich commit the same offence ? If they do, then why are they not prosecuted for breaking laws, are they exempted ?" He said, "No your honour, if you give me the orders, I shall have them prosecuted." I told him that he should do his duty irrespective of persons.

(b) Chief Justice fined :–

One day I went to the house of the then Chief Justice, The wife of the Chief Justice told me that the police was becoming a nuisance and did a most daring thing in stopping the car of the Chief Justice in front of the Kotwali police. She asked me in an aggrieved voice, "Have you ever heard of such an incident anywhere?" I laughed and asked her, "What was wrong with the car?" She said, "There was nothing wrong seriously, only one of the lights was bad." I asked her, " Why are you finding fault with the police ? It has only done its duty." She asked, "Did you give the orders ?" I replied, "Not exactly to stop the Chief Justice's car, but all cars, which break the rule of the Motor Vehicles Act." She laughed very much amused and said, "You wicked person, you wish to punish the Chief Justice?" In reply I said, "I will consider it an honour to punish him-for it is a privilege which no one will ever have," She asked, "Is the Chief to stand in the box of the accused in your court?" I laughed and said, "Oh no, but if he does, it will enhance the importance of my Court–it is not necessary for him to appear in my Court. Send your driver and it will be all right." The next thing she asked me, " Will you fine him" ? I said Yes, if he admits his fault. He will be fined the maximum as being the Chief Justice he should know the Law." Just at this time the Chief Justice came in and said to me, "I am glad that you have plenty of courage and you will do much good in the town," and paid me a great compliment ;

(c) Censure of District Board Chairman :–

I shall narrate a few more incidents of my activities for you my readers to see that during my Honorary Magistrateship though I punished my friends, officials and non-officials yet none of them ever showed any displeasure. On the contrary, I was appreciated by them and they encouraged me to do my duty on my various activities wherever Government was pleased to appoint me. During my court life I found poor people really harassed by the rich and they suffer most. Here I shall give you an example. A very poor man was prosecuted by the Chairman of the District Board for occupying District Board land–the accused

was so poor that he could not engage even a Muktear to take up his case. I took pity on him and made a local investigation and by referring to old maps and other documents, and making old people of the locality as Court witnesses, I found that the rich man's claim which was supported by the Chairman was false. As the case was instituted by the District Board, I ordered that the compensation of Rs.60/- should be paid to the accused by the Chairman of the District Board and made the Chairman responsible for compensation in order that in future better care may be taken and a proper examination of the evidence available in a case should be examined by the Chairman before he sanctions prosecution. This case created a great sensation. The District Board went up to the High Court– but lost the case–I was overjoyed when I came to learn about it.

(d) Minister of L.S.G. obstructing public road and its consequences :–

One morning I was walking in the new Dak Bungalow Road in Patna and found the whole of the road was blocked with bricks and mortars. A big house of the Honourable Minister of Local Self Government was being built. I phoned to the S.I. of Police. On his arrival I asked him, "Why have you not prosecuted the man who has blocked the Dak Bungalow Road ? You are always ready to prosecute hawkers for leaving baskets by the roadside but here the whole of the public road has been blocked and no action has been taken–why ?" He said, "Your honour, it is the Honourable Minister, who is building the house and I dare not prosecute him as I will be in trouble. I understood the man's position, pitied him and took the law into my own hand, and passed an order that the road should be cleared up within six hours failing which the Minister must show cause why he, the Honourable Minister, should not be prosecuted under the Police Act for obstructing the public road. I gave him this order with an instruction to show it to the District Magistrate and if it was in order to serve it on the Honourable Minister of Local Self Government putting the seal of my Court. The District Magistrate saw my order and asked the self to serve it. The Honourable Minister was on tour, so the order was served on his son who is an advocate of the Patna High Court. He was very angry with me but he had to obey the order of the Court and had the road in perfect order by the evening. A few days after this incident I went to see the Honourable Minister, in connection

with some affair of the Municipality. I found him surrounded by half a dozen influential city men. He was pleased to see me and asked me to sit on the sofa near him and put his hand on my shoulder and asked the people, "Do you know who she is ?" They said, " She is the daughter of our ex-Minister Mr. M.S. Das." The Minister said, "She is greater than your minister's daughter, she has so much courage and pluck in her that no man in my province has got." He repeated a Persian couplet, he said, "We have many crows in our province, they make noise and soar up very little in the sky; but she is an eagle, she goes up higher and higher in the sky. Do you know what she has done ? She served on me an order for my prosecution." They were all amazed at my daring. I thanked him for the compliment and said, "I appreciate your remark and as you have put me into high places I must do credit to your choice by doing my duties however unpleasant they might be." He said, he appreciated my work and asked me to go on as I had started and I would not regret it. I liked the man. He was a rough diamond and good at heart. I fought many a battle and he always gave in to me and I always found it was a pleasure to defeat him. My friends thought that my career was finished after this incident but nothing of the kind. I was nominated time after time not only as a Municipal Commissioner but Jail Visitor, member of the Governing Body of the Prince of Wales Medical College, by the same Honourable Minister, – but whenever he found an opportunity he appointed me on various committees. But what about our present Ministers ? The power which is given to them is abused and some even take revenge. The good old days are no more What a pity !

(e) Governor's cook fined :–

Here is an amusing incident. I am sure that you would all be amused and laugh at it. It is about the Governor's cook Patna Police were very different from the Cuttack Police. Though I was only an Honorary Magistrate, yet the Police were very much afraid of me as they knew that both the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police were greatly interested in my activities–so my order was a law to the police. They, irrespective of persons and their position started prosecuting everyone, who happened to break laws. The Governor cook was caught. One morning the Private Secretary to H.E rang me up saying "H.E's cook has been prosecuted by the Police and his case is in your court, but

H.E. will be leaving for tour this very night and I hope you will not detain him after today, otherwise we shall have no cook." I asked what offences he has committed and whether he is going to confess his guilt. If so, certainly he will be released. He said, "The cook was coming to the Government House without a light on his cycle and he has confessed his guilt." I said, "I am glad to know it if he does the same in the court. I will only fine him and he can go with H.E. He asked me," What will be the amount of his fine ?" I said, The maximum fine of Rs.10/- for H.E.'s cook to give a lesson to others," He heartily laughed and said, "Very good, I shall send the money "I was obliged to pester my friends for doing my duties. The officials as well as non officials both co-operated with me and assumed a sporting spirit when punished, and thus my task became a pleasure."

(f) Keeping time and order :–

The Police prosecuting officers were always ready to carry out my orders–one day I called a police case and was told that the prosecuting officer had not come. The case was fixed up for 11.30 a.m. The Bench-clerk told me that the Police officer does not come to court before I p.m. all the Deputy magistrates always arrive after 12 o'clock. Well, I took up other cases and waited– I could have dismissed the Police case and the prosecuting officer would have been in trouble, but I gave him a chance. He arrived at half past one o'clock. I asked him to look at the clock and tell me the time. He looked up and said, "It is 1-30 p.m." I asked him "Did you read my ordersheet ?" He said, "Yes." I asked 'him. "What was the time given there ?" He said, "It was 11-30 a.m." I asked him, "Why did you not attend in time ?" He asked me to excuse him and said he would not be late again. Since then the Deputy Magistrates also started coming at 11 a.m. and the District Magistrate told me that my presence had brought a good change in the court.

(g) S.P. comes as a witness :–

I shall narrate here another case in which the S.P. came as a witness to my court. It shows how little attention the higher authorities pay to the work in which they themselves are interested. They generally leave it to their subordinates who sometimes make ridiculous mistakes. In this case it will be seen that had the S.P. looked into the charges framed against a driver he would not have put himself into a ridiculous position.

One day, I was trying a case. The prosecuting Police Officer came and whispered to my clerk that the S.P, was waiting outside to give evidence in the case and I was asked to take up the case immediately. I told him that the case would be taken up after a quarter of an hour and asked him to wait in his chamber until called for. My Bench-clerk went after I finished the case and brought a chair and placed it in my "ejlash" where I was sitting. I asked him why he had brought the chair he told me it was for the S.P, I asked him to take away the chair as the S.P. was not a visitor. but a witness and would have to stand in the witness box. The S.P. entered my room, hat in hand bowed and said "Good morning." I returned his salutation and showed him the witness box. I took down the necessary formalities and asked him to narrate his case. He said that on a certain day in May he was riding in the morning and found a motor car coming very fast from Dinapore side. He stopped the car and wanted to see the number plate which was indistinct, A charge was framed on that ground, I asked the accused to be cross-examine by his Muktear but he was very poor and asked me to do justice in his case. Many a time I did this to help the poor as they could not afford the Muktear's fees.

I put the question from the Bench to the witness–

(a) "Did you tell the driver that the number plate was indistinct ?"
Witness– " Yes, I did."

(b) "What did the driver do ?"
Witness– " He got down from the car and wiped the number plate and showed it to me."

(c) "Did you then see the number distinctly and do you remember it ?"
Witness– " Yes".

I showed him a number plate and asked him if that was the same number plate.

He said, "Yes."

Then I told him that the number was not indistinct but only covered with dust. The driver was coming a long way at a high speed and the road being dusty, the number plate was covered with dust. So where was the offence ? The Motor Vehicles Act does not say that a driver

should get out of his car every 4 or 5 minutes to inspect whether his number plate is covered with dust or mud. The accused was therefore not guilty of the charge framed against him and I discharged him.

The witness left the court looking small. The prosecuting officer thought the presence of the S.P. in court would help him to get the culprit punished but he saw his mistake.

(h) Tampering with my Court file by a Police officer :–

I was trying a theft case–a man for having stolen rice. I let him go on bail as there was no previous conviction against him, but the prosecuting officer asked me to send him to the hajat. On the next day of hearing, he filed a petition saying that the man released on bail that very night had stolen some potatoes. So I was obliged to cancel the bail and send the accused to the hajat. The Police officer however could not substantiate his charge and lost the case. A few days after, my Bench-clerk told me that the file about the theft case had come back from the District Magistrate with certain remarks. I looked at the file and found that I was asked to explain why I had not sent the accused to the hajat when the petition was filed by the Police offices in the first time. I was surprised to read this remark as no petition was placed before me the first day not to allow bail. I looked into my file and to my surprise. I found a petition by the Police officer, which was not dated and signed by me; and there was no mention about it in the record sheet. I knew at once that the Police officer, having failed to get the accused sent to jail, put a petition after I had delivered judgment. He gave the file to the District Magistrate. I felt very angry and wanted to teach a lesson to the Police officer. So I wrote out an official explanation and asked the District Magistrate to enquire how the petition came to my file, after the case went out of my court. I took the file and my explanation to the District Magistrate. He knew that the Police officer had put the petition in my file–after having read my judgment– in order to discredit my work. He did not therefore take my official explanation as that would mean great punishment to the Police officer, but told me that I would not be troubled again like this. I do not know what happened after this incident, but the Police came to their senses. They realised that I was quite different from the other Magistrates and I would not deliver judgment in Police cases after consulting them. I

was a person to be feared and obeyed. Thus as long as I was a Magistrate, the poor people were protected from the police.

(i) Interview with H.E. for first class power :–

There are many interesting events of my court life. If I start narrating them, they will become a book. I took special interest in writing out my judgments as I did not want that they should be set aside. So I had a better record of my court work than many stipendiary Magistrates. I wanted first class power, having enjoyed second class power for nine years. The S.D.O. and the District Magistrate were in favour of my having first class power as they told me that I would be able to do many of their works. So here is another interesting story. One day I went to have an interview with H.E. Sir Hugh Stevenson. I took a statement of all my court works and placed them before H.E. and requested him to confer first class power on me. He looked at my records and paid me compliments and said, "The policy of Government now is not to give first class power to Honorary Magistrates. Your services would be recognized in a most appropriate way but I am sorry I cannot give you first class power." I said, "The policy of Government is daily changing and your Excellency has the power to change it. I am not anxious for the recognition of my services by getting a gold medal but am most anxious to show it to your Excellency that a woman can do work like a man. May I with your Excellency's permission ask the District Magistrate to recommend me to you for first class power ?" He kept quiet-there was silence in the room for a minute or two. At last I broke the silence by saying to H.E. "May I take your silence as consent." He laughed and said, "It is very difficult to say 'No' to you. You may ask the Magistrate to recommend you and I shall consider your case." I thanked him very nicely and felt quite happy to gain my object. But see my difficulty, when I approached the Magistrate and told him about the interview, he asked me to wait as the Commissioner would not like to see a woman getting first class power but to wait till he leaves the station. So ended my 9 years' Honorary Magistrateship in Patna and I was busy in other things and took interest in election affairs. I resigned my Honorary Magistrateship. In my experience as a Magistrate I feel women can make themselves useful here and do much to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. They can give better attention and exercise more patience, in their efforts to find out

truth during a judicial enquiry. I helped many "purda nashin" ladies who appeared before me and were reluctant to appear before a Magistrate of the other sex where a Magistrate is required to certify to the genuineness of a signature made in the Magistrate's presence by the "purda nashin" ladies in cases of transfer of Government securities and other transactions by them.

In 1927, three years after my appointment as an Honorary Magistrate, Bombay and Madras appointed women Magistrates. Their sphere of work lies mainly in children's courts. Women Magistrates singly were not empowered to deal with offenders; whereas Patna was the only town in India a woman Magistrate of Orissa was empowered to deal with offenders and sit singly.

In Bombay also women Magistrates sit for two hours a day once or twice a week and are authorised to see documents of the witnesses and sign papers. The position of a woman Magistrate is more like that of an assessor, whose opinion the trying Magistrate was not bound to accept in the case of a difference of opinion.

In Calcutta similar honour was conferred on some women but they were not empowered to do the real work of a trying Magistrate.

In England the first woman Magistrate was appointed in 1920. Burma appointed its first woman Magistrate in 1929. But nowhere women had the privilege of trying I.P.C. cases singly, except Patna and such privileges were enjoyed by me.

(j) Court of Wards case :-

I am always mistaken as a lawyer, why I do not know. I never had legal training but perhaps, as I love to talk much and talk reasonably and also perhaps it is due to my strong commonsense and wide experience which often, makes me feel that I could give opinion on any subject. Personally I feel that it was due to my training in Mr. M.S. Das' house, which has equipped me in different spheres of life. Gentle reader will you be surprised to learn that I was engaged on behalf of the Rani of Deora to appear before the Court of Wards of the U. P. Government. How and why it happened I will narrate here.

One day the Manager of the Punchcote Raja (Manbhum District) came to see me at Patna with a letter from the Raja requesting me to

come to his estate and take up his daughter's maintenance case and appear before the U.P. Court of Wards and asked me for my fees, I was amused when I read the letter. for never before then had I earned any money by doing any professional work and here I had been offered a fee to undertake a work for which I had never been trained, I asked the Manager "why did not the Raja engage Miss Sorabjee." The Manager said to Miss Sorabjee does not take so much interest in a Rani's case but she is always in favour of Government consequently the Ranis suffer, Raja wants a fighter and you have been recommended by two or three friends to be a most suitable person to take up this case," However I went with the manager to Punchcote Raj. The Raja had a beautiful marble palace. He had fitted it up with up-to-date modern contrivances and for comforts and pleasure things were brought from Paris exhibition and furnished his house. I was given a lovely suite of rooms. When I had a rest the Raja's two sons and four Managers came and told me all about the case. I did not pass any opinion but said after going through the necessary papers, if I felt competent to undertake the case. I would do so and then let them know about my fee. For it is my first case and I must win it. During the day I went through many files and studied the case. I thoroughly understood it. It required a person to place the whole matter properly before the Court of Wards. When we met again the next day I agreed to take it up but I demanded three thousand rupees for my services which would. be for a fortnight, as I would have to coach the Rani Sahiba and prepare a representation to be given to the Court of Wards officer and appear with the Rani Shiba before the. senior officers of the Court of Wards in Benares. The Raja agreed to pay and gave me a cheque for Rs.1000 as first installment towards my fees. After preparing my case I came to Cuttack to consult my father on some legal points. He encouraged me by saying it was a good case and said : "You are sure to win" and paid me a compliment by saying "I wish I had a junior to prepare a case as you have done it and to work with me." I felt very proud to hear this and asked my father whether any lawyer earned so much in his first brief as I did and yet I was not a lawyer. In the appointed time we went to Benares with the Raja Sahib, his two sons, Rani Sahiba her daughter, Managers and others. I appeared before the senior officer and won my points for the Rani Sahib and she got all her money for her maintenance with retrospective effect and thus ended my first real work

as a lawyer. I had also been with her to Nainital and stayed 3 months with her and also I had to work for her for which I was separately paid altogether. This case brought me Rs.10,000 in one and half years and I felt proud of my earnings. If I tell you all about this case and my life at Nainital it will be a very big volume. So I put a stop here.

(k) Election petition case :–

This was a case in which I was personally interested as I filed an election petition to set aside the election of my friend Sayed Mohammad Hafiz M.A., B.L. He and I both contested the University seat at the Legislative Council at Patna I had great excitement contesting this election and enjoyed it thoroughly. I found amongst the Biharis there was no question of creed, caste and nationality or sex. Neither do they suffer from inferiority complex. The voters gave me every encouragement to stand for the election. Even three Mohammadan voters who were friends of Mr. Hafiz gave me their votes, it was unique but such was my position in Patna that everyone was kind to me and encouraged me to do more work. At the time of counting of the votes I found I was defeated by one vote. I was staggered, as I knew I would get more votes than my rival. Ten or twelve of my votes were not counted as they did not comply with the election rule. I found that 3 of my voting papers which I personally registered were not amongst the voting papers, they did not arrive from the post. It was the mistake of the returning officer which made me lose those three votes. I studied the law book and found that I had good ground for filing a petition. I went to a senior lawyer and also to Mr. P. R. Das, Barrister, and consulted them. Everyone thought I had a good case. I deposited Rs.1,000 and filed an election petition to set aside the election. I came to Cuttack and discussed the case with my father. He asked me not to file the election case as I might have further disappointment. But I am a person who when once makes up her mind and thinks she is in the right nothing could make her give it up. I did not follow my father's advice. The great day dawned. A special Tribunal was appointed to try my case. I had five lawyers for my case but none of them would accept money from me as it was the first election petition filed by a woman in India. And it was not a dirty case. I also studied my own case and instructed my lawyers. I went with them to the court daily for four days and sat with them. After 4 days long trial when the 3

missing voting papers were opened, it was found they were good votes for me. The election was set aside. I was not elected but a fresh election was ordered. I was not disappointed or discouraged. But decided to try my luck again, as I was sure of my voters. None of then deceived me. That was a great encouragement for me. I won my election petition case and had congratulations from officials and non-officials and got back my deposit money.

(I) Insolvency Case :-

Everyone knows in Orissa that my father for more than a quarter of a century worked single-handed for the regeneration of Orissa and tried to improve the industries. He took up so many things in hand for which money was required and also he had to earn his living, Even a millionaire could not cope with the adverse circumstances of the time when he lived and the result was a big crash. Everything was sold, house, law books, furniture, Tannery, art wares everything he possessed went to the court. Now here I come into this insolvency picture. One of his creditors filed a petition that the property which I possessed belonged to Mr. Das as I never earned anything in my life. It was a fact that I earned nothing except Rs.20,000 from Insurance money and Rs.10,000 as my legal fees. The problem before me was how to prove that all my properties were my own and nothing belonged to my father, I acquired my property by the saving of my pocket money. Is it not wonderful ? But I always had generous pocket money and by investing and re-investing it, I increased the amount I made all my transactions always through the Bank. I was always in the habit of keeping accounts. My account books of 45 years I had still with me and as all my business was transacted through the Bank I was saved from ruin. I went to the Chief Justice in Patna and asked his advice as to what I was required to do. He told me I must prove how I acquired the properties by giving certified copies and give documentary evidence in the court. Could I do so ? I was relieved. I smiled and told him, "Yes, I think I can prove it," After that for one whole month I worked for more than 10 hours, a day with my old account books and got certified copies from the various Banks, Life Insurance Company and wrote down questions and answers for each of my property to prove how I got them. After a month I was pleased with my own work for I felt I was saved from ruination. I went to the late Mr. Hasan

Iman, the great lawyer of Bihar and consulted him in my case, showed him all my papers and how I prepared them. He gave me 3 full hours to go through the whole case, did not charge me any fees as he was interested in my case and he promised to take up my case should it come to the High Court and asked me not to worry, He said "no court could disbelieve you," He informed the creditors' lawyer to come and examine my papers and see whether he had any right over my property. After going through the case the creditor found out that he had not an inch of claim to fight the case as it was all my money through which the property was acquired and he withdrew the case. It was a great victory for me.

(m) Amendment to Legal Practitioner's Act :-

When Miss Hazra my late sister passed her law, she tried to get permission to practice. The Patna High Court did not give permission to Miss S. B. Hazra to be enrolled as a lawyer. Without the amendment of the Act, it was not possible for any woman in India to practice in a Court of Law.

The late Mr. M. S. Das wrote to Sir H.S. Gour to take up the question of the amendment of the Legal Practitioner's Act in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi with the renmoval of sex disqualification resolution. He at once asked Mr. Das to send me and Miss Hazra to Delhi with the necessary papers. He sent up the amendment to the Legal Practitioners' Act which he wished to move with his resolution on the removal of sex disqualification in the Legislative Assembly. We went to Delhi on 19th February 1922. Sir H. S. Gour on the following day took us to the Assembly and asked me to help him to get his amendment allowed to be moved. I did not know how I could be useful to him. We went to the President's room. Sir Frederic Whyte was the President. I was introduced to him. He enquired after my father's health and then told Dr. Gour that he had disallowed Dr. Gour's amendment. I then at once asked Sir Frederic not to be so strict and hard but to allow the amendment to be moved. He asked me "How does it interest you ?". I said "It interested me so much that I travelled all the way from Patna to Delhi last night for the amendment" and then I told him all about the decision of the Patna High Court. He said "The amendment is quite irregular and even if he allows it, which is quite impossible the members of the Assembly will raise objection." I said "If you once do an irregular

thing for the cause of woman, it will not hurt anyone but give satisfaction to Indian women and you yourself will feel pleasure, so why not try to be irregular for once only. As regards the Assembly members if they of the chair can make them sit down by saying "Order, order. He said "What about the Home Member." I said "I will see him too, but please do not disappoint me." He was most reluctant–but I pressed him hard–at last he said, that he would do his best for me. I said "Please do allow Dr. Gour to move his amendment." The Assembly bell was ringing. Members were one after the other going to their seats. I did not know them but when I asked them not to raise objection on Dr. Gour's amendment, most of them promised to help me. I saw the then Home Member, Sir William Vincent. After wishing me good morning, he told Dr. Gour that the amendment was out of order. I asked Sir William to help us. He said "I being Home Member, I cannot sit silent over it, I must raise an objection." I said Please help Dr. Gour to move his amendment and if you are to say anything against it, please say that Government will consider it if Dr. Gour will withdraw the amendment." He promised to help me– we went and I sat in the distinguished visitors gallery.

Newspapers readers of 1922 who had followed the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly must have wondered why Dr. H. S. Gour raised the question of the amendment of the Legal Practitioners' Act in a resolution on the removal of sex disqualification and how Sir Federic Whyte, that most strict of Presidents of the Assembly allowed such an irregularity to pass even when some objected to that amendment. The then Home Member after a mild protest promised that the Government would consider the amendment if Dr. Gour will withdraw the amendment, which Dr. Gour did. I felt proud of my achievement and everyone wondered at this incident in the Assembly. Not satisfied with this I saw the Home Member next day and requested him to bring a Bill for the amendment of the Legal Practitioners' Act. He was very much amused, saying "Do you know what happened last night." I said "Nothing serious I believe." He laughed and said it was serious to the President and me. "We were dining with H.E. the Viceroy, and he wished to know. what happened to both of us that we allowed such an irregular amendment to come up before the Assembly. Now we could not very well say that we were influenced by a woman, we kept silent, so I am not going to be

influenced any more by you." Anyone would have left his office after this, but I was not prepared to have his refusal, I said, "Only a year more and you will leave India and I am sure when you will think of your days in India if you do what I am asking you to do, you will tell a great satisfaction. That you have done something for the women of India. So will you not change your mind and help us ?" He asked "Why not ask Dr. Gour to take up the Bill ?" I said "It will not be so effective as it will be if it comes from the Home Member." At last he promised to do so and I thanked him, and before I left Delhi I saw all the members and canvassed for the Bill. When the Bill was introduced it met with no opposition from the House. Sir Willam had then retired. The new Home Member remarked at the time that, he wished all other Government Bills had such an easy passage as that Bill, which was made into Law in half an hour's time without a single dissenting voice. It was a great victory. Miss Hazra was the first lady to practice in Courts of Law at Patna High Court and she thus earned this unique distinction.

CHAPTER-V

"UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES"

(a) How came to be a Fellow of the Senate :–

In 1927 one day in my presence, late Sir Jowala Prasad, the Judge of the Patna High Court and late Sir Ali Imam, the great lawyer of Bihar took Sir Fakiruddin, Education Minister, to task for having them nominated to the Senate saying that they were too busy in their own profession and had no time to give to the Senate. So it was no use nominating them. It would be better to nominate such people as would do some real work. Late Sir Fakiruddin asked whom they would recommend. Sir Ali said "Have Miss Das in my place. I am resigning." Sir Fakiruddin said he would recommend me to the Chancellor of the University as there was a vacancy and they need not resign. He did so, and my name was approved and so in 1927 I was nominated by Sir Hugh Stephenson, the then H.E. the Chancellor of the Patna University to the Senate of the University. In the Senate I represented the Faculty of Arts and also the Faculty of Education.

(b) Creation of Music Board :–

Soon after my nomination I sent a resolution to the Senate to create a Board for music with seven names. I personally know nothing about music. I was asked by some Fellows who failed to do so each year, but I felt also the necessity of having it in the University curriculum for our women students. At the Annual Meeting of the Senate when the Vice-Chancellor brought up my resolution the Fellows of the Senate wished to know before giving permission the qualification of the members who will be on the Board, so all the members whose names I recommended on the Board of studies one after the other stood up and said "I beg to withdraw my name." This did not crush me though I felt uneasy. The Vice-Chancellor then asked me whether I would withdraw my resolution. I said "No." I persisted to create a Board with the remaining three names including myself–none of us know music and the fact was known to the members-so a Fellow asked that I should give a demonstration in music before the Senate so that they would know whether the mover has the requisite qualifications before the permission was granted. The Vice-Chancellor asked me whether I would do so. Nothing daunted, I got up and said "Sir, the Fellows are certainly justified in asking me to give a demonstration but let me have Bina, Sitar, Esraj and other stringed instruments of which I am expert." The Fellows all clapped their hands and unanimously gave permission to create a Board of Music. So this was how I created a Board of Music. After having the Board formed, I wished to resign from it, but you my readers will be surprised that I was not allowed but made the President of the Board so long as the syllabus in diploma was not made and thus I was on the Board for 3 years. I also introduced the Board of Domestic Science. At every annual Senate meeting I brought up a resolution which was carried.

(c) Election to Syndicate :–

Great enthusiasm prevailed in Patna in 1927 when I contested the permanent Orissa seat in the Syndicate by an election. The Senate members were to vote. I was then newly nominated as a Fellow of the Senate. I had three veteran rivals. Amongst them two were educationists of the Ravenshaw College. One of them was late Mr. S. C. Tripathy, I.E.s., who was afterwards the D.P.I. of Orissa. What chance could I have to aspire for a seat and to contest it with men whose educational

qualifications were of such superior order as to make one the D.P.I. of the new province of Orissa. But alas their qualifications were of no value to the voters of the Senate. They wanted solid work. Was it not most daring on my part to contest the seat ? Wait and see the result. My name was proposed by the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court and several other influential men of Patna University. The great day dawned for the election. I was full of hopes. The telephone bell rang in the morning in my office room. I took up the receiver and hallowed "Sir Ali speaking." I said "Yes, Sir Ali any news ?" Sir Ali said "I am sorry to give you bad news; I and some of my colleagues will not be able to come to the Senate meeting today and vote for you as the Chief Justice's Court is opened and we have a most important case at 10 a.m. in his court." I said "Cannot the case be postponed ?" Sir Ali said "No". Then laughingly I said "The court must be then closed." Sir Ali said "How ?" I said "Please tell the Chief Justice to close the High Court for two hours" He said "It is impossible, one can ask him." A few minutes after again the telephone tell rang and the Advocate General expressed regret for his inability to attend the meeting for the same reason as Sir Ali's. He also told me that the court cannot be closed. I consulted my voters list and found that I would lose 15 votes from the High Court, but I was not prepared to lose a single vote in such an interesting contest with two Oriya educationists and a landlord. I never had a defeat on any undertaking where I had set my heart to win it. I was determined to win the election. I phoned to Lady Millar, the wife of the Chief Justice and told her my plight that owing to the High Court being opened I was fearing defeat and asked her to approach the Chief to close the court. She expressed great regret for the unfortunate circumstances and said "Nobody can help you here as nobody dare approach the Chief on the subject". So in despair I did a most daring thing. I wrote a letter to the Chief and requested him to close the court for two hours and to come kindly to the Senate meeting to help his nominee to defeat her rivals. No reply came. I waited and waited with a palpitating heart but no reply from the Chief came to me. At last with a heavy heart I went to the Senate and prepared to take defeat with a smiling face. In fact I thought of a nice congratulatory speech for my victorious rival. But to the miracle a few minutes before the Senate meeting I saw the car of the Advocate General, Sir Ali and other High Court Judges and lawyers entering the University gate. Sir Sultan, the

Advocate General came to me with a serious face and asked me "What have you written to the Chief I said "How do you know that I have written ?" Sir Sultan said that there is no one in the province who could write a letter to the Chief and ask him to close the Court. I asked why ? Is the Chief displeased with me? Sir Sultan "Oh, no, the Chief is very much amused and admired your pluck. Do you know a little before 10 o'clock he sent for me in his chamber and said "Sultan, I have an order to close the Court from a higher authority from 10 to 12 a.m. So the Court is closed and tell the other Judges to close the Court and go to the Senate to vote." There was great excitement in the High Court as well as in the town for closing of the High Court for me. All waited with excitement for the result of the election. When the Vice Chancellor announced that I had got an over-whelming majority and was elected by 80 votes and my rivals the Ex-D.P.I. got 10 to 12 and the others less– great jubilation was in the Senate. The Chief with other officials and non-officials conducted themselves like college boys, shouted, thumped on the desk, making noise with their legs, congratulating me and shouting out my name. So that was my big success in the educational world. I justified my election by my work in the Syndicate which will be narrated hereafter. One of my rivals protested against my election saying I had no claim to the Orissa seat as I was not Mr. Das's own daughter. The Vice-Chancellor said that he was satisfied with my claim. But Oriya people were not satisfied. In the Press, they protested and made a representation to H.E. the Chancellor against my claim to the seat. I was asked by the Government to show my claims which I did and Chancellor was satisfied. I feel I owe a duty to my Biharee friends to mention here that the gentlemen in the Senate of the Patna University realised the importance of co-operation with women in matters relating to Education and appreciated services rendered by a woman's cause generally. It was for this reason that they were kind enough to give me an absolute majority of votes in my election to the Syndicate against the two Oriya educationists.

(d) Viceroy's visit :–

In 1928 the Government appointed me on the Secondary Board of Education. I was again elected by the Board as a member on the University delegation and also I was a member of the Text Book Committee. Wherever I was placed, I tried to make my presence felt and also I was never a silent member on any committee.

When H. E. the Viceroy opened the Science College in November 1927 at Patna, Members of the Syndicate of the Patna University were introduced to him. H. E. was then pleased to remark saying of me "This Province has the proudest distinction of having a lady on the Syndicate." I do not appropriate the honour to myself, but I feel proud that I have been the means of earning a proud distinction for the women of my Province, Miss S. B. Hazra was my predecessor in office in the Syndicate. Now my readers, I shall tell you all about my work in the Syndicate. The Orissa seat in the Syndicate fell vacant, when Miss Hazra's term was over she did not seek for re-election so I stood for it and enjoyed the contest and won.

(a) Female v Woman :-

This was a controversial point and I brought forward the resolution about it to the Syndicate. I was determined to have my resolution passed and the Syndicate would not give me leave to move my resolution on behalf of it and they challenged me to get it passed by the Senate. I took up the challenge and my maiden speech was extempore as follows "Sir I beg to move that the Senate recommend to Government that changes be made in the University regulations so that wherever the word "Female" appears, it should be substituted by the word "Woman". At the last annual Senate meeting I wanted to move my resolution, but for want of time I was told by our learned Vice-Chancellor to remain "Female" till today. Therefore I approach this intellectual body in the hope of gaining for my sex what has been too long withheld."

"The noun use of "Female" it will be admitted by all, is unfortunate and is reasonably resented. Even Fowler under whose banner the experts want to take shelter says, to call a woman a "female" is exactly as impolite as to call a "lady" a "woman." It is only an Indian Railway that persists in this use and only an Indian Government that tolerates it. Unfortunately the Indian University, even this which is the best and which justly boasts of experts and linguists, wink at such a practice and thus fail in their duty of correcting a popular mistake and enhancing and strengthening our idea of self respect.

Our guardians of language say that to turn "Woman" into an adjective with "Female" ready made is mere perversity. The word "Female" no doubt is convenient in the realm of science. In Biological,

Zoological or medical books it helps us to differentiate between the two sexes. This word "Female" is a relic of ancient time when man enforced the subordinate position on woman denying to her the right to possess property or to compete with man in various activities of life. But in these enlightened times, when woman is proving herself equal to man in intellect and understanding, adventure and sport, the word "Female" which admittedly has a tinge of contempt in it, should not be applied to women. Jealousy however is a prominent feature to preserve the antiquated connotation notwithstanding the cobweb and dust which time has spread over it. They consider themselves the guardian angels of the word and consider it their duty to protect the word against any change in its connotation. Those are the gentlemen, Sir, who can never lead, they can only follow. But Sir, I am mistaken, they cannot even follow intelligently. The wise Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London realising that words are made by man and not man for words and accepting new ways and new ideas, have discarded the ancient connotation of "Female" and adopted that which is happy and healthy for him that uses at least as much as for her who is described. Can we in India pretend to know more of English than they do at the English Universities ? Is it not ridiculous to beard the lion in his own den ? Who, Sir will dare to defy the doctors that don't agree ? We find in the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and London the word to "Female" giving place to the word "Woman." They talk of women students and no longer female students. I have with me the authorities which will satisfy anyone who dares to challenge my statements. To perpetuate in Patna what is blasphemous in Britain is pathetically brutal.

I should remind my critics of the grammarian who rebuked Ceaser with the word "You can bestow Roman Citizenship on man, but you cannot control the changes which the connotation of words undergo in the progress of the human race.

Said Hobbs "Words are the counterfoils of wise men but money of fools. The wise man reckons his coin at its present value, the miser calculates the value of his hoarded treasure at its original purchasing power.

It has been said that "England is England and India is India", and implied that the conditions in England entitle woman to be called "Woman"

whereas those obtaining in India do nothing better than "Female". This is staggering, for what women of England have in common with the women of any land is far more important, essential and wonderful, than what they have in contrast. "One touch of Nature makes the whole world keen" say Shakespeare. "The Colonals Lady and Judy O'grady are sisters under their skin." Sir, the first rule in the regulation now under discussion runs thus "Female candidates if they so desire shall be examined in a separate place under superintendence of ladies." If some of my friends Set a value on the word "Female." I should suggest a change in this rule. Let the rule be modified thus stand "Female candidates under Female superintendence." I am sure persons who are usually entrusted with this work of superintendence will object to the word "Female Superintendent."

I have personally been in a Women's Training College in Cambridge and not a Female Training College as it is called here. Sir, woman come to the University to improve their usefulness to society by intellectual training. Nothing should be done which would in the least lower her in the estimation of the public.

This world-wide efforts of my sex to a recognition of her rights, privileges, and proper position are called "Woman Suffrage" and not "Female Suffrage." Before I sit down, Sir, I wish to thank the members for giving me a patient hearing and to express my hope that this august Assembly will not decide this viral matter without due deliberation."

There was a loud cheer as I sat down and then we adjourned for tea. H. E. who is the Chancellor of the University always comes to tea with the Fellows of the Senate at their annual meeting. On hearing I was to move this resolution on his arrival he asked the Vice-Chancellor to ask me to move my resolution as he would like to hear what I had to say about the matter. At the end of my speech he congratulated me as did all the others. As a result they all supported me, where I expected opposition and the Senate recommended. The word. "Female" to be changed to "Woman." The Government accepted this recommendation.

(f) Censure motion :-

The Syndicate is the Executive body of the University. Women can do good work here and can save many a student from disaster. I shall give you here an incident to show how a student was saved from a great injustice and high-handedness on the part at the Superintendent of

the Examination Hall. An Oriya student sat for Law Examination in the Ravenshaw College. He had certain unpleasantness with the Warden of the Hostel a couple months before his examination. He was driven out of the Hostel inspite of his entreaty to the Warden. On the second day of the examination he was not allowed to sit for his examination at the suggestion of the warden by the Superintendent of the Hall, who was the Principal of the College. The student approached each of the members of the Governing Body but no one would help him and take up his case. When I came to Cuttack during the Christmas time he saw me and I advised him to represent his case to the Syndicate as I knew I would have justice from the Syndicate. I asked him to send me 15 copies of his representation which I distributed to the members of the Syndicate. The matter came up before the Syndicate and I took up the case of this wronged student. I urged that the Superintendent had no right to exclude the student from appearing in the examination when the student did not break the rules of the Examination Hall. The Superintendent was censured for dishonouring the roll number which was issued by the University to the student regarding examination. I urged also that the student was entitled to have a re-examination and my views were accepted by the 15 members (officials and non-officials) of the Syndicate and only three opposed. A special examination was held for the student at Cuttack and he passed. I was told by the Warden and the D. P. I. that I did wrong in taking up the student's cause. I fully believe that no gentlemen, members of the Syndicate would have taken up the poor student's cause if there had been no woman to urge it. I was complimented by late Sir Jwala Prasad who was a member of the Syndicate and Judge of the Patna High Court and was told that my work was a record for any University.

(g) Election to the University :-

The Patna University Regulation was going to be amended. I found that seats to the Legislative Assembly were given to the members of the Senate who were there as reprise representation of various bodies. I decided to bring a motion to recognize Bihar and Orissa Council of Women as a recognized body and to allow a seat to a woman to the Senate. I had various discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and the Education Minister and at last they agreed to my proposal. I stood as a candidate from the Bihar and Orissa Council of Women. As already mentioned there was

no love lost between the President. who was a Governor's wife, and myself and so she put up a candidate of her own. the Inspector of Schools to contest the seat with me. The majority of the English members of the Council helped the candidate of the President to defeat me. My spirit was not damped because I knew my strength in support of Bihari members. Most of their husbands were Government officers but in spite of it they all promised to support my candidature. Members from different branches of the Council were brought down to support the President's candidate. Great excitement prevailed in the town as everyone knew that the fight was really between Miss Das and the Governor's wife. Fellows of the Senate took keen interest in my candidature and wished me to return. Some of them sent their wives who were members of our Council to vote for me. Wives of high officials went from house to house canvassing for the candidate supported by Governor's wife.

The great day arrived. Bihari gentlemen kept their promise to me by sending their wives in large numbers. About 100 Bihari ladies were in the Hall where voting was to take place. Some Oriya Ladies who were my friends promised to give me votes, but voted for the other candidate. The Returing Officer who was an English Lady, wife of a High Court Judge, was surprised to find so many Bihari ladies present and asked me whether they were all members as she had never seen them before. I gave her the membership book and she looked into it and found their names in it. Votes were recorded in the voting papers sent by the University. When they were counted it was found I had been returned by a large majority. There was such a cheer from the Bihari ladies that the English ladies were kept silent. I was overjoyed and was delighted to find so many friends among Bihari ladies. I owed my victory to Behari ladies. Is this possible in Orissa ? Not at all.

The next day when I entered the Senate House where all the Fellows were present I was greeted and welcomed by loud cheers.

(h) Creating scholarship for I.A. women students :-

Even in 1931 there was no Col lege for women in Bihar and Orissa though through my efforts I.A., classes were started in Ravenshaw Girls High School in Cuttack to prosecute higher education. I wished to start I.A. classes in the Bankipore Girls' High School. There were only two high schools for girls in Bihar and Orissa. Finding that the Government

would not be able to start a Women's College I sent a resolution to the Syndicate of Patna University where I was a member to start I.A. classes in the Bankipore Girls High School. I did not know it would create such nervousness on the part of the Government. My resolution was rejected by the Syndicate as both the Minister of Education and the D.P.I. pleaded their inability to start the classes for want of money. Great discussions followed and I refused to withdraw my resolution. When I decided to have a thing I have it. I asked the Registrar of the University to send my resolution in the Agenda of the Senate Meeting. The Syndicate thought I was joking with the Minister (whom I called uncle) I would not go against his wishes. But they little knew me, when the resolution appeared in the Agenda of the Senate meeting, the Minister of Education asked me to withdraw my resolution and to move an amendment written by him. I flatly refused though I was a nominated Fellow. I asked him to let it be moved by the D.P.I or any Professor of a Government College. Then I left him. At the meeting of the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor came to me and asked me to withdraw the resolution. I asked him, "Is my resolution unreasonable that it is creating such disturbance ?" He said "No, it is a reasonable resolution and your demand is legitimate and proper. The whole Senate will support you. But Government has not got the money this year and they will be put into a ridiculous position. So withdraw it." I said "Very well, I shall withdraw it on condition that Government would give scholarships to 3 girls to prosecute their studies either in this province or in Bengal." Government consented. At-though I moved my resolution abusing government for giving stepfatherly treatment to the women of our province, yet after having assurances from them to create scholarships for women for the next 2 years, I withdrew my resolution. This saved the Government from a ridiculous position.

(i) Creation of Domestic Science Economy and Hygiene Board :–

I sent a resolution to the Senate for the creation of Domestic Science and Hygiene Board, and knew there would be no objection. When I moved the resolution a Fellow stood up and asked me whether I was creating these subjects for men students also. I said "No, but it would be better for man to gain experience of domestic science, because a time may come when women may like to enter all departments where

men are now, and men may go back to the domestic line." There was great laughter and the resolution was passed.

(j) Concluding remarks :-

The Primary Education Conference was called by the then Education Minister at my repeated requests. It had many sessions and in opening the Conference the Hon'ble Minister mentioned my name that at my suggestion he was obliged to call the Conference. I was put on various committees. Thus it will be seen that I had great privilege in playing a part in the education of my Province. I was a member of the Primary Education of my Province. I was a member of the Primary Education Committee of the Patna Muncipality, which controls the Primary Education and through my influence in the Board of Secondary Education I could influence the secondary education of the Province and as a member of the Syndicate of the Patna University I could influence the higher education of the girls throughout the whole Province. I was therefore able to voice the aspiration of women from primary to higher stage before competent authorities and was very happy for all these privileges.

CHAPTER VIII

"RAILWAY ACTIVITIES"

(a) Compensation for Cocoanuts :-

In Patna cocoanut was not available so I wrote to a friend in Cuttack to send me two bags of them. When I sent my man to the Railway station to take delivery of the bags, I was told that the parcel had not arrived. After waiting for sometime I sent the man again and told him to weigh the bags and if he found the bags in any way tampered. he was not to take delivery nor give the receipt. I asked the Station Master to open the bags in his presence and they found that the contents were mostly cocoanut shells, and fibres and stones. I refused to take delivery and wrote to the Railways to give me compensation. I got a cocoanut from the bazar paid 5 annas for it and had it weighed. On that basis. I calculated the number of cocoanuts that two bags weighing 4 maunds would contain and on that basis I charged Rs.90/- as compensation. My

friends laughed and said my application would be rejected and I would get no compensation. But the Railway authorities finding my case very strong paid me full Rs.90.

(b) Reserved compartment tragic-comedy :–

In December 1925 just before Christmas, I wanted to come from Patna to Calcutta but no reserved berth could be available at an intermediate station. The Station Master at Patna told me he would try and find some accommodation for me. I arrived at the station for the Punjab Mail. When the mail arrived the Station Master, guard and others were all busy trying to find a berth for me, but failed as the train was overcrowded having 8 to 15 passengers in all the first and second class compartments. We walked from one end of the platform to the other but without any success. The Station Master then asked me to tell him where I would like to get in and he would put me there, as he could not keep the train waiting any longer as it was already late. I made him open out a first class compartment. I got in and found it was over full. Two persons sleeping on each berth. As I sat on the nearest seat I got two kicks from the sleepers. The train was just in motion, and through the windows I called out to my servants to inform the Station Master that I was being assaulted by the passengers and would like to get down. The train gradually slowed down and stopped and the Station Master, guard and others came running up to my compartment. I was standing near the door and told them what had happened. Seeing that I had not got a berth the Station Master made two ladies come down from the upper berth. They were so frightened that they got down and the Station Master put my bedding down on the upper berth opened it and helped me to get up and told me that if I were in any trouble I should pull the alarm chain and stop the train for help. He then left and the train moved on. There were 8 Burmese ladies in the compartment. They were very rich for I found diamonds flashing from their ears, fingers etc. They were very angry with me and began abusing me loudly. They began smoking big cigars and spat on the floor. The compartment was full of smoke as all the doors and windows were closed it being severely cold. I got nearly suffocated and got down and opened a window, but two women pushed me aside and put the window up. I did not understand their language. It was midnight. I got a very bad headache and asked them to stop talking.

When they heard me speaking, they shouted even more. I got desperate and pulled the chain. The train stopped a few minutes after. The guard came with a railway policeman to my compartment and I told them what had happened and I could not sleep. He took out his notebook and recorded the case and asked them to get down. Their men folk seeing the guard and police come up asked what was the matter. On hearing the story they asked us to forgive their women and assured me that they would not disturb me any more. I asked the guard and the police not to take any further action. They warned the ladies and left. After that I had a quiet night. In the morning when I got down from the berth they fetched my slippers and seemed quite friendly.

We arrived at Howrah Station. When I got down I looked and found to my dismay a label of a reserved compartment, hanging from the door handle. I realised that the compartment, had been reserved for the Burmese ladies. So after all I was trespasser in their compartment and they could have easily prosecuted me.

But the fault was of the Station Master and Guard of the Patna Station. Is this not a comedy of errors my readers ? I forgot to tell you that as a Magistrate I tried all railway cases and so I knew the railway rules.

CHAPTER IX

"JAIL ACTIVITIES"

(a) Women political prisoners :–

I worried Government to place women on various Boards and Committees, as that time was very different from the present and unfortunately in those days there was no woman in Patna to take up these responsibilities so I had to be put in all these responsible places. I did not mind this at all for the more work I had the happier I felt. I was appointed the first Woman visitor in Patna Jail. My duty was to visit, the female ward and represent their grievances if any to Government and give suggestions for improvement.

Many ladies of good families had been arrested for Civil disobedience movement. One day while visiting the Jail, I went to these

undertrial prisoners. They were seated under a tree. I asked them "Have you got any grievances ?" They said. "We have got plenty, but what is the good of complaining when we are here." I said "If your grievances are reasonable I would approach the authorities and try to redress them" Then, some of them said, "Give us fruits and "chatu" and not rice, as the rice and dal and ata are full of sand and stones." The Jailor was with me and denied the allegation and told me I would find out the truth by visiting the kitchen. The women then asked me to let them have their beddings and saries which were sent from their homes, but were kept in the Jailor's office. The Jailor said that under the rules they could not have them. I assured the ladies that if they were entitled to have them under the rules, they would get them that same evening. I then went with the Jailor to the kitchen and found a thala nicely arranged with rice, dal, vegetable and a bit of lemon. I tasted them and found nothing wrong with it. I told the Jailor it was nicely cooked. My next action made the Jailor nervous. I walked into the kitchen and opened a big "Dekchi." I asked him to get a spoon and took up a spoon full of rice from the bottom of the Dekchi. put it on the "thala" and picked up large number of black stones. The Jailor said they were black rice. I then asked him to put them in to his mouth and tell me if they were rice or stones. He hesitated, but I made him taste them and asked him what they were. He said, "Madam, they are stones." I made further examination and found that the complaints made by the ladies were true. I told the Jailor that the allegations made by the ladies were quite true and he kept quiet.

I then went with him to the office room and asked him for the Jail Code. He brought it and I asked him to show me the rules which prohibited from giving the beddings, etc. to the ladies. He showed me a rule applicable to real prisoners and not to undertrial prisoners, was were quite different. The Jailor had discretionary powers to see that the undertrial prisoners do not take anything by getting things from their homes. I asked him to give the ladies their beddings and saris, after having examined them.

Then I wrote a strong remark in the Visitors Book regarding the food and its bad quality which was given to the undertrial prisoners to harass them. On my next visit the Jailor told me that an order has come from the Government that I should not visit the political prisoners or their

kitchen. I asked the Jailor who had sent the order? The Jailor replied that the Superintendent of the Jail would explain and I found him standing outside. I asked him about this order and from whom he had received it. He repeated what the Jailor had said and told me to visit the criminal women prisoners only and not the political. I asked him again whose order it was and wanted to see the order. He sent the Jailor to fetch the letter from the office. He took the letter and read it himself first but said he could not show it to me. I asked whether the order was from the Government or I. G. He said he was sorry he could not disclose the name. I thanked him and asked him to give me a paper which the Jailor brought. I drafted a letter to the Judicial Secretary of Government then and there informing him how I was prevented from doing my duties to the female prisoners under orders of the Jail Superintendent. I said, " It seems to me that since I took up my duties, the Jail Code must have been amended, as there is no mention of political prisoners in the Jail Code." I requested him to send me a copy of the amended Jail Code. This would help me to do my duties as otherwise I refused to visit the Jail. I read out my letter to the Superintendent and asked him if my statement was correct. He said "yes." I asked him to put his signature on my letter. Then with his permission I took up the receiver and phoned to the Judicial Secretary telling him about the letter I was sending him and I asked him to place my letter immediately before the Judicial member. I then left the Jail and waited for the reply. I was told that my letter made quite a commotion in the Patna Secretariat. The reply from Government came and it said that the order is not for me at all but it concerned the male detenus and that the I. G. had made a mistake about the order. I was to continue my work as before.

A few days after the Superintendent of jail was transferred.

(a) My daring action in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement prisoners :–

During my stay in Patna I did many daring things but not as daring as that which I am going to narrate here, and I escaped being punished.

One day at Patna I was asked by Mrs Hossain Imam to come to her house immediately, I went there and found the room full of influential Congress men of Patna who asked me, "What has occurred in the jail this afternoon ?" I replied "I do not know anything." Mrs. Hassan Imam

said "You are a Jail visitor and you should know what is happening there." I said "My duty was to visit the jail once a month to see the female prisoners. So naturally the daily happenings in the Jail are unknown to me." Then someone said I must find out what happened in the jail that afternoon because they saw the Police and military entering the jail that afternoon and soon after they heard the report of firing inside the jail. They thought that many of their relatives were killed who were arrested and in the jail and I was asked to bring some information about them and their safety. I explained to them why it would be impossible for me to bring them any news as I would not be allowed to go to the men's side. They would however take no excuses from me and thought I was the only person who could get some correct news from the jail by seeing the political prisoners myself and so must help them.

Something within me stirred to take this job up and do something. I said "Very good, I would try to do it, even if I am arrested." Next morning at 9.30 a.m. I entered the jail. The outer compound of the jail was full of motor cars, ekkas and a crowd of people. They cheered me as I entered, as the news had leaked out that I was going to the Jail to find out all about the firing. The Jailor was there and I asked him to come with me to the female ward. We went together. I told him that I would also like to go to the Congress prisoners and whether he would take me to see them. He emphatically said "No." I did not worry him further with any question or requests. During my visit to the female prisoners I gathered from the Jailor the position of the tents of the political prisoners and after I left the female ward made my way towards them. The Jailor got nervous. He was watching my movements. I first went to the Carpet Department and from this to the Oil Department. Then I went straight to the Congress Camp with the Jailor. He was greatly troubled and did not know how to stop me visiting these prisoners as it would mean his dismissal from service. I however paid no heed to his pleadings, but just walked on. When the Congress people saw me, they came out of their tents and cheered me saying "Miss Das ki Jai." They were greatly surprised to see me there with the Jailor. They stood round me and I asked them to tell me what had happened in the Jail the previous day and whether there were any casualties among them. The Jailor forbade them to answer any question of mine. I told them not to obey the Jailor but to tell me

frankly all that happened as I had to tell it to their friends who were anxious and wanted to know the truth. The poor Jailor was dumbfounded at my daring but could do nothing. The prisoners said there were no casualties and I asked for the cause of the firing in the Jail. They said that when the Superintendent came to visit them they refused to say, "Sirkar Salam" but only saluted him. This enraged the Superintendent and they were asked to keep to the cells the whole day. They refused to do so but they were forced to do and in trying to do this the Police used lathis and fired some shots. Several of them were injured but no one had died. I spent about ten minutes with them and gathered the information I required. The Jailor was greatly disturbed and was actually trembling. I told the Jailor he could only forcibly eject me by a Magistrate and I would take the consequence, but must gather the information I wanted before leaving the Jail. I asked him to take me to the Hospital where the injured men were. He refused but followed me silently. I assured him that I would take all the responsibility of my action. and that he would not be dismissed. I entered the Hospital and found 20 injured men bandaged and in bed. The injuries were not serious. They also told me the same story. I scolded the students for breaking Jail rules. I asked them whether they were comfortable and when they said they were. I then left them and came to the office. When the office window was opened I found 2000 people waiting outside. I came out, stood on a platform and told them that there were no deaths, but only slight injuries as a result of yesterday's affair. They then quietly dispersed believing my statements.

I came back to the office and, phoned to the Hon. Judicial Member who was an Englishman, and asked to see him at once to speak to him on a most important matter in connection with the Jail. He told me to come at once. When I entered his office he smiled and asked me what the matter was. I narrated all that I had done that morning inside the Jail. How I had disobeyed the Jailor and went against his repeated requests. I said that I knew there was great excitement in the City and there was fear of a disturbance unless they had some authentic news about the happenings of yesterday. At the request of the influential Congressmen I promised to bring in news and pacify them and with my bold action I managed to quiet the crowd outside the Jail and sent them away quietly.

Then I said that as I had broken the rules I was ready to face the consequences and requested him not to punish the Jailor for my action.

He smiled and said "Miss Das you have done a most daring thing. No man would have done what you did, and I on behalf of the Government thank you as you have managed to avert serious trouble by the mob." So ended my activities.

Think and tell me my readers, Can I or anyone else dare to break the jail rules ? Congressmen never thanked me for the daring work I did for them. Whereas the then Government made me a Jail visitor so long as I stayed in Patna. What a difference !

PART - IV

CHAPTER I

"RETURN TO CUTTACK"

(a) Mahatma Gandhi's Visit to Cuttack :–

In the winter of 1927 I came from Patna to Cuttack. My late father Madhusudan Das' house was to be sold by auction. He was ruined owing to his several industrial enterprises. As there was no one to help him he incurred debts for which his houses had to be sold, to meet his liabilities to the Maharaja of Parlakimedi.

Just at this time the local leaders of the Congress came to my father to request him to accommodate Mahatma Gandhi and his staff at our house. They knew my father's financial trouble but they did not hesitate to put a new responsibility on his shoulders. My father's nature was such that he would spend his last pice for others, sacrificing himself for the cause of the country. But the Congress men never did anything to appreciate his work. My father gladly agreed to have him as his guest.

My father went to Ahmedabad in 1924 to seek help from Mahatmaji for his industrial development. He promised to do something for him but he could not do it. Had he been able to help my late father, he would not have gone to his grave a disappointed man. Gandhiji knew his troubles, but he was not able to help him. When he was our guest I was asked by my father to accompany Mahatmaji everywhere, which I gladly did. It was arranged that Gandhiji would address the women of the town. I accompanied him to the meeting at the Town Hall at Cuttack. In those days, there were not many Congress ladies in Cuttack, nor were they financially well off, as they are now under the National Government. Very few ladies attended the meeting. Gandhiji sat on a table and spoke to them for about 15 minute. The ladies put their *pranam* before him for Darshan. The collection was about Rs.60. Seeing the small amount given by the Cuttack ladies he was disappointed. I wanted to speak to him but restrained myself, though I knew most of the ladies were not well off. They had paid what they could.

That night my father, Mahatmaji, his Secretary and some others were sitting on a carpet in our drawing room and talking. I was also present there. Mahatma addressed me and said "I came specially to Cuttack as your guest, for I want a favour from you." We looked the surprise we felt. Then I said "I will certainly do what you want me to do, if I am able." He said "In Patna, in Calcutta and even at Cuttack those who know you have told me that you are the person who can help me, so I want your help." I said "I am much honoured because of your confidence in my ability, but am sorry I cannot give you my promise until I know the nature of the work and of my ability to do it But he was adamant and said he was sure I could do it for him. He said "I want you to take up Charka and introduce it to the ladies of Orissa." With folded hands I begged him to excuse me as I would not be able to make it a success. He asked "Why can you not make it a success, when everyone says you can ?" I answered "Unless I put my whole heart and soul into the work I cannot make it a success." He asked "Don't you believe in Charka ?" I said "No, the Charka will never bring salvation to India or solve its economic problems. But it is good for the cultivators. They can grow cotton in their own fields, and can make their own dhotis, sarees and gamchas. But the middle and rich classes will never take to it. Then he asked me again "If you do not believe in Charka why are you wearing a Khaddar Shari ?" I replied "You are our honoured guest. I do not wish to appear before you in any sari which will be repugnant to your eyes." He asked "Am I to understand that you will discard Khaddar as soon as I leave your house ?" I said "Yes," He kept quiet for a minute or two. Everyone present was surprised at my boldness. Then Gandhiji said again "Very well, now I shall ask from you another favour will you do it ?" I said "Unless I know what it is, it is difficult for me to say whether I shall do it or not. I cannot deceive you by saying I shall do a thing which I never intend doing." He then stretched his hands and said "Give me all your sarees." I said "Please excuse me, I am sorry to refuse you again. For I know you will burn all my saries. I do not wish to make a bonfire of my saries. They have not hurt me and my lifelong policy is "Waste not want not." He said "I shall give you a dozen fine Bezwada Saries every year as long as I live." I said "I am sorry the proposal does not tempt me. If you are so anxious not to use foreign things why are you using motor cars, medicine and watches, etc. They should be discarded by you. But under the present

circumstances we cannot do so." Gandhiji did not like my answers. He said, "In ancient India a host and hostess would give anything to a guest and you cannot give your saries to me I said "We are not in ancient India, our ideas have changed under British rule and we have adapted ourselves accordingly. We are used to so many things that we would find it difficult to give them up. If you want me not to buy any foreign things I am willing to promise." Gandhiji did not appreciate my remarks. He turned to my father and said "You hear, how your daughter talked to me." Then he addressed me and said "I want you to become a member of the Congress." I said "I shall be pleased to become a Congress woman when I shall believe in Congressmen and Congress policy. I shall let you know and come to your Ashram at Sabarmati," I asked him to pardon my bold remarks. He left our house the next evening saying that I should be welcome to his Ashram, whenever I come but I never had the pleasure and honour of being his guest at his Ashram.

CHAPTER VIII

VISIT OF SOME CONGRESS LEADERS AND THE VICEROY IN CUTTACK

After the Independence of India some of the Great Congress Leaders were appointed in the Government of India by their own party, Sardar Vallabhai Patel was one of them. He came to visit Cuttack, though Orissa was a poor Province, yet one could not have thought or felt that Orissa was lacking in making a great demonstration in welcoming Sardar Patel. But it was decided otherwise by heaven. The streets from the bridge of Kathjuri river to the residence of the Prime Minister in the Fort were decorated with thin bamboos, whitewashed and with Debdaru leaves and coloured paper festoons. The rain drenched them thoroughly. It seemed that nature was crying while the people were rejoicing. At State cost a big Garden Party was arranged. Having come to power the Congress authorities had much money at their disposal to welcome a guest from the Centre. Big preparations were made, garlands, shamianas, flowers, etc. were all there to welcome the Chief Guest. The main, table where the Sardarji would sit was laden with delicacies. Nearly 500 people were invited. I was one of them. Just at the nick of time, when guests

were arriving the heaven opened its doors and torrents of rain showered blessing. The whole place was full of water. On the main table where all the delicacies were placed, I saw some bathtubs, were placed to hold water, as the shamiana was leaking badly. Not a single dry seat could be found. However heaven taking pity on us poor mortals considerably lessened the rain and we could sit on wet chairs and enjoyed our tea as best as we could. After tea, H. E. Dr. Katju, the then Governor of Orissa introduced me to the Chief Guest by saying. "She is the daughter of the maker of this Province, Sri Madhusudan." Hearing this the Sardarji extended his hand to me and I salamed to him.

(a) Visit of Lord and Lady Mountbatten :-

Orissa was very proud to be visited by the last Governor General of India. To welcome him ground entertainments were organised. Nearly 1000 people were asked to the Garden Party at the cost of the State. It was rumoured that a large sum was spent. At this Tea Party the Premier, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab paid me a great honour by placing me next to the Viceroy, introducing me as the daughter of Sri Madhusudan, the father of Oriya Nationalism and the Maker of the New Province. His Excellency then turned towards me and said "You are then the sister of the Province and I am glad to have met you." It is my bad habit to joke with one and all. So I looked at a Minister sitting five places away. from me, I called out his name, and asked him whether he had heard what His Excellency had said. He replied "No, tell us" I said, "He calls me the sister of the province, so you are all my brothers. as I am the eldest sister you are to carry out my orders and administer this province well. "Then I turned to the Viceory asked him "Am I not right Your Excellency ?" He laughed and said "Yes." Thus ended the pleasant function. There was a Dinner Party in the Govt. House and about 100 people were invited. We all enjoyed a grand dinner at the cost of the State and had a good time with Lady Mountbatten.

(b) The Prime Minister's Visit :-

All the Congress Leaders when they visit Orissa cause great expense to the State. The Government has to entertain them. When Prime Minister, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru came, there was a Garden Party in the Government House. The Chief Minister entertained him at a Dinner Party at State cost. The Shamiana was beautifully decorated by artists

brought from Calcutta. Fireworks and theatricals caused people to criticise the Government. Saying "why this waste of money when people have no food and no clothes. Life was getting harder and when essential requirements could not be procured under the Ramraja, what then would be the condition under the Rakshasraj?" Under the National Government pomp and luxury are rampant. One Province vies with other Provinces in this matter. But who is there to control ?

The Father of the Nation was no more, but his disciples instead of following the leader brought discredit to his creed. I had a talk with a Governor of my Province on this subject. He observed "It is necessary to show that we are not a backward Province." But at what cost !

(d) Second visit of Sardarji :-

I came, I saw and I conquered. This visit was political and most important. It made Orissa one whole. All the Feudatory States of Orissa, numbering 36, were merged with Orissa proper and came under the National Government. No doubt it was a happy day for Orissa, but a great calamity for the Chiefs. They were all taken unawares at a Government House meeting. Here Sardarji presided and his Secretary, Sri Menon gave a printed paper to each of the Chiefs present there by special invitation. They never dreamed that they would lose their States and everything at one stroke. They signed away their birthrights to the National Government. They were too secure in that princely heritage under the British raj, who pampered them much that they never even dreamed that they would be bereft of all but allowances and so called few privileges. They were simply staggered when they saw the paper and were dumbfounded. But one of the youngest Chiefs stood up to protest but he was made to sit down by the iron gesture of Sardarjee. They had to be present, they were sacrificing their beloved heritage for the good of the State. Thus all the Feudatory States of Orissa came under the National Government except two States and Orissa became a great State, my father's dream was realised. During the evening the Chiefs signed away their States and then they attended the great Banquet which was held at Government House to console them. How long the Chiefs will enjoy their privileges, as they are now enjoying the citizenship of India, their princely allowances should be stopped that is the cry of the people.

CHAPTER IX

GOVERNMENT'S REQUISITION OF HOUSES

Dr. P. C. Banerji's House:

One day my friend Miss P. N. Shome who was staying with me at Cuttack got a wire from one Dr. Banerji of Calcutta, who had a house at Puri and was staying there, that his house at Puri was requisitioned by Government and he was asked to vacate the house within a fortnight. No appeal to the Magistrate was of avail. He was ill and he could not shift. But the Magistrate was adamant. My friend showed me the telegram and the letter and asked me if I could do something to help him. I took the wire from her and went to a party in the Government House. After tea I went to the Chief Secretary and asked him who had ordered the requisition of Dr. Banerji's house. He said "It was my order, but why ? I told him that his District Magistrate was a heartless man, he should have human District Magistrate and the present District Magistrate should be suspended or transferred The man had no discretion. I narrated Dr. Banerji's case and asked him to suspend the order also told him that our Government should not harrass a Bengali and put him in trouble. He asked me would it please me if he derequisitioned the house. I said Dr. Banerji's prayer should be granted. He passed the order. Dr. Banerji's house was derequisitioned and he was allowed to stay in his own house.

Dr. Banerji's case was not over here. I paid him a short visit at Puri and then the old man told me his troubles. Just in front of his house facing the sea a long narrow pucca house was built by the Military during their period of occupation thus obstructing his passage to sea side. This house was sold at an auction to the then Superintendent of Police of Puri who had also taken lease of the land where the building was standing. Dr. Banerji wanted the house to be dismantled as it should have been, because that land was on Khasmahall and (a public road). Poor Dr. Banerji fought hard to have the house dismantled. But all his efforts failed so far. Then rule the Government officials had no power to lease out any Government land without special sanction. I pointed this out to the Chief Secretary who after going through the whole cries was convinced that a great injustice had been done to Dr. Banerji. So the Government cancelled the lease and also passed an order to dismantle the building.

This order was left to the Deputy Revenue Commissioner who called both parties but instead of communicating the order of Government he started de novo trial. Poor Dr. Banerji in his illness had to come to Cuttack, again at Puri and this way he was greatly harassed by the officer. My help was sought for and I again took active part and made the officer to communicate the order to both the parties at that sitting. This I could do only because we had a strong and able Chief Minister, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab and an efficient Chief Secretary Mr. B. C. Mookherjee, I.C.S. I had been able to redress the grievances of many people who came to me simply because we had efficient and just men at the helm. But what a difference now it is ! Even the cry of the people is not heard by those who are in power.

CHAPTER X

N.C.W.I. BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AT CUTTACK

In November 1947 the Indian National Council of Women wanted to have their Biennial Conference at Cuttack. The Orissa Council which is known as Nari Seva Sangha refused twice to hold the Biennial Conference at Cuttack. But Lady Trivedy, wife of the then Governor of Orissa, who was the President of the Sangha agreed to hold the Conference at Cuttack as she did not like to refuse third time. India became independent in August 1947 and Sir Ghandulal Trivedy was transferred to East Punjab. We were without a President and felt like a rudderless ship as Lady Trivedy had undertaken to meet all difficulty. The difficulties were many : financial and accommodation and entertainment problems. We, the members of the Nari Seva Sangha, were at last obliged to have the Conference at Cuttack. We held many discussions about electing a Chairman of the Reception Committee. Some of the Oriya is ladies without experience and ability wanted to have the honour of becoming a Chairman. The reason was that as the Conference would be held at Cuttack an Oriya lady should be the Chairman, but others who knew about the difficulties of organizing a show, had me elected as Chairman so that I might shoulder the burden. I formed several sub committees and assigned their duties. But raising the money and finding accommodation, the two most difficult tasks I kept for myself. I

went to see the first National Governor Dr. Katju and sought his advice. I told him that with the departure of Lady Trivedy the mantle had fallen on his shoulder. Readily he consented to give his help and promised to keep the President and some other ladies in the Government House and to give a Tea Party to the delegates and ladies of the Conference. Being successful with the Governor I went and saw the Premier, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab at the Cuttack Secretariat and asked for a grant of Rs. 4,000/. He said Government would gladly give Rs.500/- for holding the Conference and entertaining the delegates. I refused to take it. He asked me, " What sum do you require ?" I said "Nothing less that Rs.4,000/-." I also remarked that if Government could sanction Rs.4,000/- for the expenses of a few members of the University delegates for 2 days, did he think that it was too much for 50 delegates for 7 days to be entertained by sanctioning Rs. 4,000/- ? He enquired about our programme. I told him plainly if Government felt that this money would be wasted on a women's social and educational Conference to be held for the first time in Cuttack, he certainly need not sanction the money and I would cancel the Conference being held in Cuttack by sending a wire to the President that the Orissa Government have no sympathy with the women's movement. He laughed and said "Do not send the wire, the money shall be paid to you." He gave a beautiful house for the delegates and invited them to a grand dinner party. He told the Chief Secretary to help us whenever we wanted his help. We raised Rs.2,000/- from the members of the Reception Committee. All our preparations for the comforts of the delegates were greatly appreciated. On the opening day of the Conference the Governor presided. Nari Seva Sangha was packed with officials and non-officials and the members of the Reception Committee. The Chairman's address was appreciated. Meetings were well conducted and everyday the delegates were entertained. The members of the different sub committees did their work well. This enjoyable function came to an end with success and the delegates departed.

Here I must thank our Premier, Sri Harekrushna Mahatab for the success of the Biennial Conference in Cuttack. The delegates were surprised to find that our Chief Minister was so sympathetic to the women's movement and gave a sumptuous feast. I do not think that any other State would sanction Rs.4,000/- for the entertainment of the delegates for holding Women's Conference in the State.

CHAPTER XI

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND ITS TRAGEDY

When the Constituent Assembly was first formed every Province had its quota of members for the Assembly. Provincial Assemblies would elect the candidates for the Constituent Assembly. Orissa had her quota of 9 members. Non-Congress candidates had no chance of being elected as the majority of Assembly members were Congressmen and they would vote according to the directions of the leader of the Congress Party.

I wrote to the Chief Minister that a seat should be given to a woman. After great discussion a seat was allotted to a woman. I went to the then President of the Congress Provincial Committee and asked her opinion whether I had any chance if I stood for it. She and her husband, who was a minister told me that she would not stand and I had every chance of being elected. Moreover I should not worry as the voters were all Congress men. Again I asked the President if she would not like to stand and she emphatically said "No. I asked her husband to get a nomination form for me and get it proposed and seconded by two members of the Assembly as I did not know them. He seconded my name and sent the nomination paper to me and asked me to get it proposed by the leader of the Opposition, the Raja of Kanika. He proposed my name. I then took the paper and went to see the President asking her once again whether she would like to stand as a candidate, for if so I would not file my nomination paper. She emphatically said again "No, why do you question my assertion. I have given you my word so go and file your nomination paper."

Somehow I felt that something would happen and I would not be returned, I had a premonition. However I filled my nomination paper. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon I received a letter from the husband of the President that his wife had filed her nomination paper after I had filed mine. I could hardly believe it when I read this. But I did not withdraw my nomination paper as I wanted to see what the majority party would do for the minority party. The Provincial Congress President was elected.

So you see my gentle readers that after this I could not entertain good feelings for the Congress or my State committee. If one cannot respect his or her word he or she cannot expect to be respected by others. Is it not a fact ? You will see how I was treated in a future election.

CHAPTER XII

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Under the New Act of the Government of India double seatlrs in the Constituent Assembly had to vacate their seats. Constituent Assembly came in place of the Parliament. In my province five members of the Constituent Assembly had to resign and 5 persons had to be elected in their place. I did not take any interest in the beginning knowing full well that the Utkal Congress Committee would not deal fairly with me. The Chief Minister told me that he would also help me to go to Parliament and I thought they would rectify the wrong done to me in the past. Some of the Congress Assembly members also told me that they would follow the direction of the leader of the Congress Assembly party, so after this everyone thought that I would be elected. I paid the Nomination fee of Rs.100 and signed the Congress creed. This I did, knowing well that I would never go and take part in any active field. I was very ill. I was told by an eminent doctor of Calcutta that all my activities should stop if I would like to prolong my life. In spite of this I paid the Nomination fee to the leader of the Congress Assembly party to see what would happen. But again I did not get a single vote though I was assured by some members and minister that I would get some votes. I saw from the list that I had got no votes from anyone. You can easily imagine my feelings when treated like this by men placed in high positions. I sent my statements to the Prime Minister of India reported the whole matter and said that if we women became anti-Congress would he blame us ? He sent my leader to the Chief Minister of Orissa asking him to take action immediately. But what action could he take when the election was over. Now my readers what do you think about it ?

CHAPTER XIII

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

During the cold winter of 1949 Dr. S. Radhakrishnan came to hold the University Commission. I was asked by the Vice-Chancellor to give evidence before the Commission. When I approached Dr. Radhakrishnan two or three other persons were present. The Vice-Chancellor was also present. Dr. Radhakrishnan asked me "How is it that Women's Movement is very slow in your Province, I am told you are a fighter, why can't you create a precedent here?" I replied "That no amount of fighting with our National Government can make a woman to create a precedent. In the National Government, non-Congress women have no chance." He said "Still fight and create a precedent". I said "I shall try."

In January 1949 the Premier of Orissa feeling that a great wrong had been done to me by keeping me aloof from all public activities, told me that within two or three months he would put me in a most conspicuous place. I could hardly believe my ears as I felt the National Government would not do anything for me. In March we learnt that the Joint Public. Service Commission of Bihar and Orissa would be separated. Orissa would have its own Public Service Commission. Suddenly it struck me that I would like to create a precedent for women. As the thought came to me I acted on the impulse. I went to the Chief Secretary and asked him "Could a woman become a member of this Commission ?" He said "Certainly but where is the woman ?" I asked him "What about myself" He said "You can be, but would you really care to work ?" I said "Yes, just to create a precedent," Then he asked me to write a letter to the Premier to that effect.

Next day I asked him whether he had delivered the letter to the Premier, and what did the Premier say. He said the Premier would consider the matter. I went to the Premier the next day and asked him whether he would have me as a member of the Commission. He told me that he would speak to me after his return from Delhi. After his departure I learnt that the members have been appointed. I was greatly disappointed. After his return I wrote to him that I was greatly disappointed as I believed he would make me a member of the Commission. The Premier sent a

reply immediately giving a long explanation and again assuring me that he would correct my impression of him, and that he is the most dependable person and I shall find it out in future.

After a year or so when I talked to H.E. of Orissa about this, he told me that Prime Minister was really in difficulty. He wanted to have me on the Commission but having appointed a Christian as a President they could not have another Christian it the Commission consisting of 3 members only. I said "Why then was I made to hope for it ?" He only smiled. I liked this Governor very much. He used to call me sister and as I always called a spade a spade, he liked talking to me. He told me that he would give me his steno and I must talk as I talked to him as it would be quite interesting to read. He also advised me to write out all my experiences. Now when I am following his advice, he is no more. I felt his death keenly as I felt I have really lost a brother.

PART - V

CHAPTER I

IMPRESSION OF MEN AND THINGS IN MY LATER LIFE

My impression of Cuttack as a young girl and in later life :–

When I first came to Cuttack with my parents in 1890 I thought it was the most beautiful spot I had ever seen in life. The Garjat hills in the North and West, the big river Mahanadi and its branch Kathjuri surrounding Cuttack like an island, seemed to me something unique. Coming straight from Calcutta the scenery pleased my eyes and seemed most attractive to me. I used to go with my father to the house of his friends – most of whom were domiciled Bengalis and some Oriyas. I found these people were simple, honest and religious. Though they had not western education and culture they were renowned for their eastern qualification – hospitability. Hardly any Oriyas held high posts those days. There was no consciousness of political, national, social or civic ideas. Women were also simple in their ways and habits. They knew nothing outside their homes and were conservative to the bone. There was hardly any education among them though the majority were literate. Girls above ten were considered to be marriageable and early marriage was prevalent. Their dress and ornaments were very different from Bengalis. Except Christian girls, others wore only one sari above their ankles. Heavy ornaments adorned their wrists, ankles, neck and ears. They were free from social and political jealousies. Simple living and food were quite different from what they are now. Missionaries were the pioneers of girls' education in those days, but the education was only of the primary and middle type. It was the Christians who began copying Bengalis in dress and this slowly spread among others. But what a change within half a century ! Women's education has spread, women are advanced in every – dress, food, ornaments and even serving in men's posts. But culture is even now wanting among many educated men and women. Though some women are highly educated they seem to lack initiative and energy for social service. I find they still suffer from inferiority complex both among men and women.

Amongst men, since the creation of the Province, provincial and communal feeling are very strong, though most of them are holding high posts in Government Service. Times are so changed that the angle of vision has narrowed down to a groove round the individual. Happy and simple life has gone for ever, never to return to the golden days of the past.

CHAPTER II

MY IMPRESSIONS OF PATNA – WORKER AMONG WORKERS

When I first went to Patna in 1921 I felt that the people there were somehow different from the people of Orissa not only in food, dress, manner and culture, but also in their kindness and sympathy to a stranger. They all extended a warm hand to include a woman worker among them. They did not suffer from inferiority complex nor were jealous of a woman's work. They liked service from a woman for the uplift and welfare of their women. Women's position in Patna then was very much what it was in Orissa. Purdah was their stronghold. Illiteracy prevailed and there were other social drawbacks. Gradually Biharee women came out of purdah with the taste of education and they started to take up social service.

I felt a great pleasure in working with men there. I could not have done in Orissa what I did in Bihar had I not got the co-operation and sympathy of the men to give me an opportunity to be one of their workers. I therefore enjoyed a unique position there and felt that I spent the better part of my life among these friends of mine. Those happy days are gone never to come back again. In my humble career I got co-operation from government as well as from the people. I had several friends who I knew would never deceive me. My best friends were Dr. Sachidananda Sinha, Sir Fakiruddin, Sir Hasan. If I had any legal difficulties these friends helped me, but lawyers would not take any fees from me. They have helped me in many ways and I am most grateful to them. Patna life was a happy life for me. Because it made me what I am to-day, working with men in various committees and departments, I earned experience, free

thinking and courage of conviction, which helped me greatly in my various activities.

CHAPTER III

MY IMPRESSIONS OF FRIENDS AND FOES

(Ingratitude V Gratitude)

God's great blessing to man is a real friend. I had enemies but I had God's great blessing in having real good friends.

My horoscope says that though I would have enemies they would be of such position as not to be able to harm me. But my friends would be of such high status and my guardian angel would so closely help me that my life and work would always be crowned with success.

Ingratitude has hurt me largely for in spite of my helping people in distress and trouble over and over again, I have met with indifference, forgetfulness, neglect and ingratitude.

Here I shall give you some incidents which will make you see how I have been treated by those to whom I rendered unique services.

Let me take a Maharaja's case. It is needless to describe their personal characters. I knew a Maharaja's son. He called me "didi" and I loved him like a brother. He had a beautiful wife whom he never saw. She was in great distress and asked me to help her. Inspite of all the social customs and prejudices against such action, I took up her cause and made peace between husband and wife, who lived happily for sometime, and a baby daughter was born to them. I left for England and on my return I found the Maharaja's son had become a Maharaja and had wasted all his future on a disreputable woman. He lost his 'gadi' and was ostracised by everyone. After my return when I went to see the Rani the baby daughter requested me to bring her father to her. I did a most daring thing in entering this disreputable woman's house without the knowledge of my father. It was a most daring thing for a young girl like me to do, but my woman's instinct prompted me to satisfy the craving of the child for her father. I entered the house of the Maharaja and called him by his name. He came out and took the dust of my feet. I put my hand on his shoulder and said "Come with me" and I brought him in my

car to his little daughter, but could not keep him there permanently. When his mistress died, he found himself a pauper. My father brought him to our house and we tried to reform him as best as we could. The Maharani and her children were brought down by my father from her State and they lived together. The Maharani's allowance used to be spent mostly by the Maharaja for his drink. The Maharani would come to us in a state of destitution and was often in want of money for her daily needs and my father helped her many a time with money. When she was almost on the point of death after the delivery of her second son, my father nursed her day and night as she would not have anything to eat or drink from anyone but from my father. The Maharaja, his wife and daughter all had a tragic end, leaving two sons behind.

These sons knew the history of their parents and how my father had helped them but they never thought of giving a helping hand to my father when he was in great distress, neither have they ever inquired of his daughter, or taken notice of her in any way. This is ingratitude with a vengeance. If I wrote all about this family it would be a volume. So I desist here.

Here is another instance of ingratitude. One day while I was sitting in my house an Oriya boy came to me and asked me to help him to get Rs. 1000/- from Government as a loan for him to complete his piloting examination. I told him it leave my room. I phoned to Dr. Haribandhu Mohanty, Secretary Industries Department. He said "No, I have no money to give," But the boy asked me to go to the Chief Minister which I did. He also asked Sri Mohanty whether a loan of one thousand rupees could be given to the boy. Dr. Mohanty's reply was the same "No money." Then the boy requested me to speak to the Chief Secretary. The boy said that nobody would the able to do anything for him, but it was the belief in the Secretariat, that I would be able to get the money for him. I phoned to the Chief Secretary ; he asked me to send the boy to him. After the boy returned from the Chief Secretary he told me that he would help him after a week and he asked Dr. Haribandhu Mohanty, "Couldn't the loan be had from some other source ?" The boy requested me to speak to the Finance Minister. This I refused. Then he started crying saying that if he did not get the money he would commit suicide as he had mortgaged his father's property. I felt pity for him and I phoned to

the Finance Minister and asked him if he would give me a loan of a thousand rupees. He asked me, "What will you do with the money ?" I told him the case of the boy. He refused to give any loan. Then I told him that unless he gave the money there would be a suicide in my house and he must come to my rescue. Then he said "Very good, send the boy to me." I asked him if he would take the responsibility off my shoulder. He said "Yes." The boy went to him and returned very happy saying "He would give the money to me." The boy never came back to me when he received the money. This shows the ingratitude of human nature.

I cannot help mentioning here that inspite of all my efforts to help Orissa educationally and socially I have not been appreciated at all by the people of Orissa. It may be due to my nationality. Here is a glaring instance which has convinced me of ingratitude of my State. In the Council of States I had worked far better than any of my Congress colleagues of the State. This can be verified by the innumerable questions I put to government in connection with my State and thereby trying to get money and other privileges for my State. Once the Union Communication Minister while taking lunch at Cuttack remarked at the table to the Finance Minsiter and other Ministers, "Miss Das is holding the banner of Orissa in the Council of States." This shows the appreciation of the Centre of my efforts for my State. Yet when I was balloted out after serving two years in the Council of States, I was not renominated by the Congress Pradesh Committee and the leader of the Congress Assembly Party, though the latter assured me that he would send me to the Council. Yet I found that in Bihar, Mrs. Laksmi Menon, serving in the Patna University Training College for a few years only who was balloted out also with me, and was sent back by the Bihar Congress Committee to the Council of States. Almost all the other States returned the out-ballotted members, but mine did not. Am I not justified in being hurt over all this ungratefulness on the part of people whose interest I tried to serve so well ?

Here is another instance of glaring ingratitude of one of my relations. I gave Rs. 75,000 to help him during 50 years of his life. I married his daughters and educated his sons. In my old age I bought a house for his sons, so that they may not stand on the road. But his avarice has no bound. He wanted my whole property. Failing to get all my property he treated me so badly that words fail to express it. That human nature

could be so vile is a revelation to me. The wound has gone so deep that I shall never recover from it. Vidyasagar said truly that if you do anything for anybody you create an enemy. I feel the truth of it.

But my readers, do not think that I have experienced ingratitude only in life. I received love, kindness and gratitude from quarters quite unexpected. Here I will give one instance. Forty years ago I did a very slight service to a Rani. The state was under Court-of-Wards and she suffered much humiliation and even insult from her European Governess appointed by the Court-or-Wards. I was instrumental in saving her from this humiliating position. The Governess was dismissed and she not made happy. This instance was put in their office records. Many years after I met the daughter-in-law of this Rani who was herself a Rani. I did not remember the incident of so long ago. But she had read it all and remembered it with love and gratitude for the aid. She helped me in many ways whenever I was in difficulty. When I was seriously ill she offered to stay with me day and night in the Nursing Home and look after me. She is my best friend in my old age.

When I was in Patna I could help people in various ways owing to my activities there. I secured many friends in high circles, from whom I always received help and kindness. They were grateful to me for what I had done for the welfare of the people and in times of trouble, anxiety and difficulty, they always gave me help and advice which I valued much. Some of my friends in Patna had warned me then not to settle down in Orissa after my father's death as I would never be appreciated in Orissa. How I now wish I had listened to that disinterested advice, for then I would have been saved from much disappointment, worry and sorrow in my old age.

The late Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha, whom I called uncle, and who really took interest in me like an uncle, when he came to Cuttack last as Vice-Chancellor of the Patna University to deliver the Convocation Address to the Utkal University, asked me most earnestly that I should leave Cuttack and settle down at Patna where he would look after my interests. But my promise to my father helped me to withstand the temptation and sacrifice all my interest. It gives me strength to bear and overcome all my difficulties.

PART - VI

CHAPTER I

THE PASSING OF THE GRAND OLD MAN :

My late father, Sri Madhu Sudan was always physically weak. But in his case, the mind ruled the body. His indomitable will ruled his weak body with an iron hand. But this could not go on for long. He did not take sufficient nourishment for a long time and the result was a breakdown. In January, 1934, he felt very weak and hardly could digest any food. After the great earthquake in Bihar in January, 1934 my sister sent me a wire saying "Dada is very ill." I felt a premonition that it was the last illness and came to Cuttack at once. On arrival I found him lying on a couch in his bedroom, physically very weak yet full of spirit. He wanted to know all about the Bihar earthquake. He told me that I should try to raise funds for the Bihar sufferers. I convened a meeting of ladies and told them that we should raise at least Rs. 1,500 within ten days. My father was getting weaker daily. My two brothers the late Chandra Kumar and Jitendra Kumar arrived in due course, my late sister Sudhanshu Bala was here. We four brothers and sisters passed our time by his bedside. Crowds of people came daily to see him and to seek his blessings and many stayed at night. Col. Palit was attending him. One day he told my father "You have no disease, only for want of food you are feeling weak. You must have plenty of nourishment." My father asked the doctor a question "Is there any medicine in your science, doctor, to save a man whose call has come from above ? My call has come and I am ready to depart in peace." My late brother Chandra knelt down by his bedside and asked him "Dada have you no wish to live ? Why then do you always talk of leaving us ?" He said, "No, for I could not do any good to you all, but I would like to live only for Orissa and to see my dream of a greater Orissa is fulfilled."

Daily when people were coming to see him, he wished them goodbye. With some he discussed the future of Orissa and its problems. He had a glimpse of the New Province of Orissa. He asked me in which Province I shall live after his death for I had houses in Calcutta, Cuttack and Patna. I replied, "You know very well what my position is in Patna

and all about my activities there. There I have many real friends. I can also make a position for myself by my activities in Calcutta if I stay there too. But can I have the same position in Orissa ? You know your people well and their feelings towards me. I am not wanted here. I shall always suffer from inferiority complex and "dog in a manager" policy. But as you want me to stay here, I shall do so till I die. The last part of my life will be spent here. I shall sever my connection with other provinces." He was pleased with my decision and blessed me and said "Will you be able to sacrifice your ambition and stay in this house till you die ?" I said "Yes, I promise."

On the 3rd of February he seemed to be much better and I told his friends not to take the trouble to stay here at night. He took a few teaspoons of rice as doctor advised. In the evening he reminded me to go to the ladies' meeting for the collection of the Bihar Earthquake fund. I and my sister left him quite and calm with a wish that he should sleep. I left his servant to stay near him. I was absent only an hour. On my arrival his bearer told me that my father did not speak, but lay very quiet, he did not like the way my father was breathing very slowly. I found a break in the breathing. I went nearer and called softly "Dada, are you in any trouble ?" He said "No." But somehow I felt that it was the last scene. I at once sent for his friends and doctors. By 10 p.m . the house was full of people. In my remembrance it was the coldest day. Men were wearing overcoats, but the Doctor opened all doors for fresh air. Very slowly and calmly the great soul was passing away. Rev. E.R. Lazarus asked him "Shall I pray ?" He gave consent by nodding his head. A prayer was offered. His favourite hymn was sung.

"I heard the choice of Jesus say

Come unto me and rest.

Lay down thou weary one lay down

Thy head upon my breast.

I was giving him a little water in a teaspoon to drink

By 1 p.m. on the afternoon of the 4th February Madhu Sudan fell asleep in Jesus. His body lay in state in the marble floored drawing room for thousands of people to pay their last homage. His body was carried in a bier in a procession as requested by several of his friends throughout

the town of Cuttack. The cemetery was overcrowded. The body was covered with flowers and placed in the coffin. From Puri some friends came and the bier was covered with flowers. Many ladies took some of those flowers to preserve them in his memory and made their little children put their head on his feet for his blessings from heaven. There was a short prayer and then his body was placed in the coffin. A short service was held. The coffin was gradually lowered into the grave and covered with earth. Friends threw earth and flowers and then the whole coffin was buried. Next year a suitable monument, quite unique, was erected by me. It was unveiled by the last Divisional Commissioner Mr. E.S. Horney. The Epitaph on the grave of Madhu Sudan is quite unique. Every 4th February people go to the cemetery to pay respect to the dead and put flowers. Mr. Horney delivered the following speech before he unveiled the Monument–

"My friends, we meet together today, men and women of all creeds and ranks and occupations, to do honour to the memory of one who was a great servant of the people and a great lover of all classes of people. In a life, devoted to their cause, he strove for the recognition of his race and country as a nation, as an equal and honoured partner in the league of the nations which is the commonwealth of India, and in death, it might well be said of him in the words of the Christian Burial Service "how shall this mortal put on immortality?" He ever obeyed the command "Fight the good fight with all thy might"; the fight against the power of evil, against injustice, humiliation and inhumanity, manfully he led the way towards the promised land of self-governing Orissa, and if it was not given to him to enter it, at the end he stood, like the dying Moses, on the highest peak of Pisgah, in full view of it below him, in the certain assurance that it should be the heritage of the people; and so could cry :

"Oh grave, where is thy sting,
Oh death, where is thy victory,
He is not dead : he layeth down
His sword and cross to take his crown"

Let us not forget that we owe him more than honour to his memory. He strove not for his own honour but for the honour of his nation. It is for his people to prove themselves worthy of that honour, and, as he dedicated

his life to the union of the nation, so to dedicate themselves to the future of the nation. Above all he served in that selfless devotion which is perfect love. The union of Orissa by map and constitution will be an empty shadow of reality unless it is to be union of hearts, the spiritual brotherhood of all, working in selfless harmony for the common will, and we shall be unworthy of his love unless we also love."

An Englishman can really appreciate the work of an honest, selfless man, unfortunately, though we have got the privilege of being independent and we are under our own national government, there are very few men who can appreciate the work of such a man. It is really to be regretted that the only efforts to keep up his memory in his own State have been made so far by his daughter. His countrymen forget that they owe him more than honour to his memory.

When I made the gift of Madhu Smriti house to the Orissa Government, I made a condition that a life size marble statute of Madhu Sudan should be erected in the front garden, I am glad to say that the Government is trying its best to make the statue worthy of its name. Government also ordered the road in front of his house and leading to the cemetery, through which his bier was carried, to be named after him.

CHAPTER-II

MEMORIAL FOR MADHU SUDAN

After the death of my father I wished that his name should be associated with the first Girls' High School which through his efforts was founded and that the Anniversary of his death should be observed in the school as he was the real pioneer of women's education in Orissa. I carried out his instructions and worked to make the first Girls' School a success.

I approached the then D.P.I. of Orissa on the subject. He fully agreed with me and suggested that his portrait should be unveiled in the Ravenshaw Girls' School and the Founder's day should be observed. When the matter came up before the Managing Committee of the School the Oriya D.P.I. was then in the place of the European D.P.I. and a lot of difficulties were brought forth by him and the members as they were not

ready to give honour to one to whom the honour was due. The lady members were jealous of observing the Founder's Day and great discussion took place. However the portrait was unveiled by the last Commissioner of Orissa. The Death Anniversary of Madhu Sudan was not observed in the school properly. The past history of the school did not contain the real facts and by the order of the Congress Education Minister it remained as such. I tried my best to set it right but failed to do so. At last when the Congress Minister left, through the efforts of Mr. B.K. Gokhale, C.I.E., I.C.S., Advisor to H.E. the then Governor of Orissa, the history of the school was changed at my suggestion, real facts were put in and a marble tablet was fixed in the library to show that the High School was founded by us and that it was a real successful female education in Orissa.

Since then the 4th of February of each year is observed as the Death Anniversary of my father at the school and a meeting is held where an essay written by the girl is read on the life of Madhusudan and a gold medal presented by me for which I have endowed a sum of Rs. 2,000.

The public of Orissa held many meetings to make a grand memorial of Madhu Sudan but all the big talk only ended in smoke. In 1936 when the new Province of Orissa was created the public of Orissa announced before the first Governor at the Oath Taking Ceremony at the Ravenshaw Boys' College Hall that the people would like to have a Madhusudan Provincial Library to commemorate the memory of the Father of Oriya Nationalism. This also ended in smoke as there was no real attempt and people do not wish to take trouble. So the eyes of the public turned on my house thinking the daughter should make a gift of her house for the memorial of her father. I was told that some money was collected for the Madhusudan Memorial. But no one seems to know where it was and by whom collected.

In 1937 Sri Biswanath Das, the then Premier of Orissa expressed a wish that I should give the house to the people of Orissa on trust because the house was the place from where Oriya National life radiated throughout Orissa. All the public activities in Orissa for the last fifty years started from this place and the Congress has taken up his work in this house my late father lived and breathed his last. The Premier held out promises to

do big things with the house to perpetuate my father's memory. I was led away by his keen interest and glowing picture and promised to make a gift. As suggested I sent him a proposal with certain conditions. A meeting was held at my house by him with his departmental heads of officers and all my conditions were accepted. But the most important point was the money to maintain the gift and carry out the scheme which he said would be invested in the Bank afterwards. I could not accept his words and asked him to write to me officially to which I would reply. But the official letter never came. This shows the earnest with and real intention of the Government and since then I was careful.

In 1949 a similar thing happened when Sri Hare Krishna Mahatab was the Premier of Orissa. He also promised to do big things, if I made the house a gift. I agreed and sent my conditions to the Government which were accepted by him and the then Chief Secretary verbally. But up to this day no reply came from Government. The file was sent to the then Development Minister, Sri Nityananda Kanango and repeated reminders could not being any response from him.

In 1950 I saw our Governor and told him everything. He took keen interest in it and called an informal meeting in the Government House to fix the aims and objects of the gift. A sub-committee was formed to draft a deed of gift and to suggest the name of the Trustees. But the most important thing the money question came in again to develop the scheme and to maintain a Trust. The would-be Trustees plainly said that unless Government gave the money nothing was possible. The Hon'ble Development Minister was present there. He was asked what money government was prepared to give for recurring and non-recurring grants to maintain and develop the scheme. He said he would consult his colleagues and then let them know. But up to this day no letter came from him inspite of several reminders. I also saw the Chief Minister about this. He was eager to have my house and promised to let me know about the money question. But I had not heard anything from him even in 1950.

In this connection I would like to quote a passage from the Hon. the then Chief Minister, Sri Hare Krishna Mahtab, who in his D.O. No. 924 H.C.M. dated 13.2.50 wrote to me "After the death of a great man if any individual or group of individuals exclusively take upon themselves

the duty of organising the honouring of the dead then the other are estranged. The best thing therefore is to leave it to the public."

My late father wrote a letter dated 28.12.24 in which he said "I am very much pleased to hear from Sri Dawson Miller that your life is a source of benefit there (Patna). That is the highest form of love you can show to one who have given all to the people. The other day I met a high European officer from Patna who told me that every one speaks highly of your public activities. As regards your desire to perpetuate my memory in Orissa I do not approve of it. I shall talk to you when we meet on the subject. But this much is certain that nothing should be done to perpetuate my memory.

I find that there is God's hand in it. I tried to perpetuate his memory but my efforts have failed three times. Therefore I felt that I should not in any way try to perpetuate the memory of my father. All the above facts convinced me that I was wrong in trying to do it. Therefore I wrote a letter to Government cancelled my offer and changed my mind in giving my house to the people of Orissa.

I wrote to government to that effect making a statement and explaining why I changed my mind. This was in February 1951. I left Cuttack for medical treatment as I was seriously ill. During my absence the Vice-Chancellor of the Utkal University tried to acquire my house which was Madhusudan's House and which was a purchased property from Court sale by driving her out from her only residence and shelter. He proposed to have the Madhusudan Law College in this house and thus take away the residence of Madhusudan's daughter in her old age. But God is always with her and her father's spirit is helping her to overcome all the difficulties and you will see my readers in the next Chapter how God helped me.

CHAPTER III

SOME ACTIVITIES AFTER MY FATHER'S DEATH

After my father's death, I lived in Cuttack as I promised him. Orissa was made a separate Province in 1936, consequently, there was great task for the Government to make arrangements for the new

Province. I was appointed by Government as a Municipal Assessor with Sri Manmatha Nath Bose, Ex-magistrate of Puri. He said he was very pleased to have me for his colleague as I had done well in the Patna Municipality by increasing the revenue of the Municipality I told him that I have already refused Government to be an Assessor. He asked me why, I said, "I had plenty of enemies here, and do not wish to increase the number by doing honest work in the Municipality." He asked "How did you manage in Patna?" I said "People are very different here than they are at Patna." He asked me to assess my own house, which I did to his satisfaction.

Honorary Magistrate :-

· In Cuttack there was a dearth of Second-Class Magistrates, the then District Magistrate of Cuttack asked me to become an Honorary Magistrate, knowing that I worked as an Honorary Magistrate for 9 years in Patna. I refused the honour. One day Sir Hawthorne Lewis, the then Governor of Orissa told me that he would give me First Class power and I should accept it. I laughingly told him "Your Excellency, I do not wish to be His Majesty's guest in my old age." So I declined the honour with thanks. He asked me, "What do you mean?" I explained, saying "in Patna I fined the Chief-Justice of Patna High Court, Minister of Local Self-Government, Officials, non-Officials, everyone there co-operated with me when I fined them. There was no ill feeling towards me. They paid me compliments for doing my duty. But here if I fined your Minister for breaking the bye-laws I would myself be sent to the Jail, so why should I court jail in my old age, when I know your Ministers are different from Patna Ministers. They will not appreciate my doing duties to the State." He asked me "Is this your opinion of my Ministers ?" I said "Yes."

Fellow of the Senate :-

I was a sitting Fellow in the Patna University. When the Utkal University was started the sitting Fellows of the Patna University were not taken in the new University of Orissa. When all the Fellows were elected and nominated, one day, I spoke most bitterly to the then Chancellor, Sir Hawthorne Lewis, that the authority who nominated Fellows had done a great injustice to the sitting Fellows of the Patna University, who were residents of Orissa and they should have been

taken in instead of new members. He told me he had no hand in it. But I said to him that as the Chancellor of the University it was his duty to nominate efficient Fellows in the University. Next day, I had a letter from his Private Secretary, that H.E. the Chancellor had nominated me as a Fellow of the Utkal University. My gentle readers, I was not pleased at it. It seemed to me that owing to my talk with him the day before, he had made me a Fellow. I could not accept it, for it hurt my pride, neither could I refuse it, that meant insulting the Chancellor. I was in great dilema. I went to the Government House, to Lady Lewis to have it out with her. The Governor came into her sitting room, saw me and enquired after my health. I said "I am feeling miserable." He asked me "Why?" I replied "Owing to your Excellency's action." He asked, "What have I done?" I told him about the nomination and how it hurt my pride as I thought owing to my talk he had kindly nominated me. He had a hearty laugh over it. He said, "I had it in mind when you were talking to me, I had already put it down in my file. Only I did not like to say it to you. So put the idea out of your brain. Try to do work as you did in Patna University." He was really a friend to me and I liked him. Once I laughingly told Lady Lewis that I was in love with her husband. "Are you jealous?" "Oh no, I am very glad, for my husband is fond of you." Somehow I got on very well with all the Governors of Orissa, except the first one.

Jail Work :–

I became a Jail Visitor in Cuttack. One day while we were going round the Jail with the Magistrate, I found some Naga Sannyasis in a cell who were all on hunger strike. On enquiry, I was told that they were worshipping according to their rites with burning lamps in their hands in the caves at Khandagiri. They did not decipher any letters of the cave, but they were naked. But under a wrong section, the Magistrate of Puri, who had tried the case sent them to Jail for 10 months. This was ridiculous. I was an Honorary Magistrate, would have let them off with warning, when they had committed no offence. But for a District Magistrate to err was serious, so I took up the case, wrote a strong letter to the Chief Secretary drawing his attention to the injustice done to the Nagas. Sri B.C. Mukerji I.C.S. was a very efficient Chief Secretary. Instead of being put out, he welcomed my letter as he always did and thanked me for bringing such cases before him. He called for the file

then and there, released the Nagas, for they had committed no offence and transferred the Magistrate from Puri to Cuttack as A.D.M.

You see my gentle reader, if a Chief Secretary is strong, hard working, efficient and honest he can certainly redress many wrongs and grievances. It was a sad day for Orissa when he left the place.

CHAPTER-IV

GIFT OF MADHU SMRITI

(a) For Women's College :–

I have already mentioned that the public and government wanted to take my house to make a memorial of my late Father. But no one would approach me in the proper way. Finding that neither the Government nor the public really intended to do anything but meant only to take away the house from me I finally decided not to give it here best to leave it to my relations. Now my gentle readers you will see how I was treated in respect of this house by the then Congress Government.

In 1951 I was very ill, and staying at Puri in the B.N.R. Hotel a high official from cuttack who came to the Hotel and told me, "You are here and your house is going to be acquired by Government, it is gazetted." I could hardly believe my ears. My late father Madhusudan did so much for Orissa and I who had worked with him for the welfare of the country that my old age of 77 years I was going to be rewarded by the government by becoming homeless. I was told by an eminent lawyer and the then Chief Justice that I would have no relief from the High court. I went to see the then Governor and told him my whole history. He was most sympathetic and kind to me and assured me that while he was the Governor of State nobody would harass me and take my house and asked me to look after my health and leave all my worries to him.

The next day the Chief Minister came and said "Why are you worrying when I am here nobody can take your house ?" He withdrew the notification in the gazette with respect to the acquirement of my house and sent me a copy of it. When he came to see me next I offered him my house as a gift to the Government. He was greatly surprised he could hardly believe his ears. That a person who fought like a tigress for

her house should be willing to offer it as a free gift. He said, that owing to my various activities and educational work in Orissa, the Government had already named the first Women's College after my name and as the College had no building of its own, Shaila Bala College would be located in this building and it is quite fit and appropriate that women's higher education should spread from Madhusudan House where she had her political and social education. I gave several conditions. Three or four most important conditions are that 28th April of each year, the birthday of Madhusudan, should be celebrated in the College (since then nothing has been done up to 1955). Second, 4th February of each year, the death anniversary of Madhusudan should be observed. Third, 25th March of each year, the birthday of the owner should be observed as the Foundation Day of the College. Lastly a life size marble statue shall be put up in the front garden of his house. I wanted to make over my house after my death as the house was the means of livelihood for me. But as the Government wanted it immediately they gave me a pension, for which I was badly criticised by some members in the Orissa Assembly. They said I had no right to make a gift, as the house did not belong to me, losing sight of the fact that I bought the house at an auction sale. On the 28th of April 1952, Shoila Bala Women's College was inaugurated at Madhu Smiriti, Madhusudan building, and there I addressed the meeting. A copy of my speech is in the Appendix. The History of the house and the people who lived in it, is one of sacrifice and service in the welfare of their country. It is to be hoped that girls who are educated in this historical house will follow their example and make work their life and life their work.

(b) gift of Law Library for the Orissa High Court :-

My father's law library which is worth a lakh of rupees belonged to my sister Shudhansu Bala who bought it from the court sale as my father's property went into court when he took insolvency. My sister was the first lady Vakil in India. Through her and my effort the Legal Practitioners Act was amended as I have already mentioned. After my father's death she wanted to present this Law Library to a public institution. But as there was no institution where such books would be useful she left the Library to me to be given to the Orissa High Court when it came into existence. The High Court was established in 1948 and I made over

the Law Library at the suggestion of the then Chief Justice Sri B.K. Roy to the High Court. Where in a separate room the books are kept and the room called "Madhusudan Law Library." A portrait of my sister and father was unveiled. A marble slab giving the history of the library was placed on the wall.

CHAPTER-V

DEATH OF MY BROTHERS

The years between 1942-48 were memorial years for me. During these years I lost my two brothers and only sister.

My brother Nagendra Kumar Hazra first went to the other land. He suffered for a long time from kidney troubles. He was most independent and honest. He left a daughter and a son behind, who are dear to me.

Then God took my second brother, Chandra Kumar Hazra. He died of coronary thrombosis. His death was a great shock to me. His was a dear brother and very honest. I bought my Cuttack house in his name, intending to give it to him after my death. The property which is now worth 3 lakh of rupees. The moment I asked him to return my property to me he returned the property by a deed of relinquishment. Such was he ! His son Dilep Kumar is staying with me in my house.

CHAPTER-VI

SUDHANSHU BALA MY LIFELONG FRIEND

My late sister Shudhanshu Bala was in my charge since the death of my mother in 1892 and was brought up in Mr. S.Das' house. She passed all her examinations up to Law as a private student and paid all her educational expenses by working. She was very independent and would not take any help from any one. She was also a Kindergarten teacher. Thus she helped considerably in training my teachers in the Ravenshaw Girls' School in 1908. In 1913 when I made over the Ravenshaw Girls' School to government, Shudhanshu Bala was appointed

the Head Mistress of the Kindergarten School. She used to work as well as study. She stayed at Madhu Smritri ever since I came to Cuttack. She was the Inspectress of Schools in Bihar and Orissa and was appointed afterwards as the Lady Principal of the Ravenshaw Girls' School. After· her retirement she lived in Madhu Smriti with me. She was very independent and refused all help from me. After passing the law when the Patna High Court refused her admission she sent an appeal to the Privy Council and a representation to the then Viceroy and through out joint efforts the Government introduced an amendment of the Legal Practitioners Bill in the Central Assembly, which without any dissenting voice from the members passed into an Act in 1923. She then was enrolled in the High Court in 1923 and practised as a lawyer in the Patna High Court for two years. During my father's insolvency she was of great help to him.

From the Court she bought my father's library an many other pieces of furniture. After my father' death she never left me even for a day and would go every where with me as she did not like me to travel alone. She had an abdominal operation in 1933. After that she was not quite her own self. In 1948 in May she went to the Cuttack Nursing Home. As the doctors could not do anything for her I took her down to Calcutta for treatment. She suffered great pain but never complained. She had cancer of the stomach. She loved my father so much that she would not part with anything which my father used. Each and everything with my father's association was precious to her. So on her death-bed she made me promise that his Law Library must not go out of Orissa but must be made a gift to some suitable Institution. After her death in Calcutta on July 4th 1948 I kept my promise and made a gift of it to the Orissa High Court. There her portrait was unveiled by the Chief Minister and a tablet was placed on the wall containing the history of the Law Library. Thus she received a unique honour.

Since her death I have never thought that she is no more. Madhu Smriti is full of her associations. I never realised during her life-time that I would miss her so much. I have never found a friend like her and at every stage I feel her absence and feel very lonely in the big house.

Shudhanshu Bala tried to follow her Master's footsteps. In her last illness she took up her cross bravely and with great fortitude. She forgave the wrongs done to her by others and she had a kind word for all and kept smiling, dissociated herself completely from worldly things till the very last. Death came to her on the morning of 4th July and without a struggle she softly crossed the river of Life. I have preserved her personal things along with my father's in a museum at Madhu Smriti. She will always be remembered for her self-sacrificing spirit and her love for my father and myself. May her spirit be in peace. She was buried in Calcutta cemetery where I have preserved her grave suitably.

CHAPTER VII

MERGER OF SARAIKELA AND KHARSWAN AND TROUBLE OF ORIYA SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THOSE STATES

After my sister's death, I became very ill. So I went out for some change to recoup my health.

On my return to Cuttack in September 1949, I read in the local newspapers about the atrocities committed by the Bihar Govt. in the States of Saraikela and Kharswan which caused great distress to the Oriya people. I could not sit still. Whenever I hear any wrong is done to anyone I always try to write to the authorities to seek for redress. In the case of Saraikela and Kharswan I wrote to our Prime Minister, Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, deputy Prime Minister. Sardar V. Patel, Law Minister Dr. Ambedakar and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly and later Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha, the great leader of Bihar. I sent a copy of all my letters to our State Government and also to Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, the Chief Minister of Orissa and Chief Secretary of Orissa.

At this distant date I have mislaid some of the important letters which I wrote and also the replies. I find I have got a copy of my letter addressed to Sardar B. Patel and the late Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha and some replies from my State Govt., which I am giving below.

First Letter

"Madhu Smriti"
Cuttack
Orissa,
The 30th August, 1949,

Dear Sardar Patel,

I am very glad to learn from the statements in the Press that you are improving in health and that it is expected that you will soon be your robust and strong self again. The sooner that happens the better. For it seems we can't do without our "Strong man" even for a short while. The matter that has prompted me to write this letter to you is a case in point,

I am sure that information regarding the atrocities committed by the Bihar Government on the Oriya population in the two Oriya States of Saraikela and Kharswan have found their way to your sick bed. I am also sure that they would have disturbed you considerably. For your anxiety that every one should have a just and square deal is well known. I would not have ordinarily thought it fit to add to your discomfort by disturbing you in your illness with a long letter like this, but I feel unhappy in hearing about the happenings in these two States. Besides some people in Orissa and some refugees from the affected areas have asked me to do something for the victims of this authoritative hooliganism. They consider it my duty to take up this cause as the daughter of the late Madhusudan Das, the father of Oriya Nationalism. I agree with them. But as I told them, I am seventy-five years of age and my nerves and eyesight are far from good. If I had been 10 years younger, I would probably have merited the distinction of being the National Government's prisoner of state by offering Satyagraha in Saraikela and Kharswan where innocent people are being terrosised and harassed by the Congress Government in Bihar, simply because these people are not willing to be 'Biharised'. But weak and disabled as I am, my thought flies to you for because of you unbending will for strong and straight action you have become known as our "Iron Man".

When you helped Orissa in amalgamating with her the ex-State areas, the whole of Orissa blessed you for giving shape to their long-cherished dream and long-felt want of a strong and consolidated Utkal.

We expected then that all the outlying Oriya tracts would be brought into this Greater Utkal and this would in its turn become a strong and useful limb of Greater India. But for some mysterious reasons, the amalgamation of these two states with Orissa was delayed. Ugly rumours got about that this was due to the influence of some eminent Biharis in the Congress High Command. But many of us discounted the rumour as we put our faith in your reputation of unflinching impartiality. "The Sardar won't put up with any nonsense of that sort" many of us used to think and say. It was being said during those days by the people who wanted the States to remain with Bihar that for reasons of territorial contiguity, the two states could be better administered in Bihar. That pretence was no longer of any avail after the integration of Mayurbhanj in Orissa. But inspite of this we learnt sometime ago that the two States have been given to Bihar. Even then if the Bihar Government had properly looked after the Oriya population in these States, I would usually have thought it best to have things as they were. But their organised repression and hooliganism has beaten the similar acts of the British government in India. All these have shaken the faith of the people in their fairness and have tarred the fair name of just administration under the National Government.

If my father were alive to-day, he would certainly have taken up this cause in his own unique way. I am but a poor substitute for his able and eminent personality. But I hope I can depend unhesitatingly on your courage and fairness. I remember a courageous bureaucrat, Lord Curzon, who in fairness to popular agitation recalled the iniquitous partition of Bengal which was his own doing. Will it be too much to expect a great national leader like yourself to do what is right and just in this case where it is abundantly obvious that the wrong is not only one of injustice but that it has given birth to exploitation, repression and terrorism. How can we build our State on solid democratic foundations if we deny to the weak the fundamental liberties and allow strong aggressors to suppress their identity by terrorism and tyrrany ? I invite your kind attention to two recent statements in the Press, one from the Leader of the Opposition Orissa Assembly and the other from the Raja Saheb of Saraikela. These would speak for themselves.

I have no doubt in my mind that you will give this matter your most earnest and sympathetic consideration and would undo all wrong and

injustice. I hope also that this pleading from a woman would not fail to move your kind heart. If this does not succeed, I shall have no other alternative but to run to you either at Delhi or elsewhere, inspite of my age and infirmity, to try and convince you of your duty to do justice by the oppressed people who look up to you as their saviour.

A line in reply will assure me that this letter has reached you safely.

Hoping to be excused for this intrusion,

I remain, Yours sincerely,

Sd.S.B.das

The Hon'ble Sardar V. Patel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, Government of India, Camp – Bombay.

N.B. I did not get any reply from him as he was ill. His Secretary acknowledged my letter.

Second Letter

"Madhu Smriti"

Cuttack

September, 1949

My Dear Uncle,

After four months' sojourn out of Cuttack I have come back home again, not benefiting much in health, gaining much experience and knowledge by my stay in Musoorie, Dehrah Dun, Delhi and Calcutta.

I am writing this long letter to you today on a yet important matter. I hope you will kindly give your best consideration and help me to be successful in my efforts to get justice done to the people for whom my father did so much. In fact, he gave his life for Orissa. With his last dying breath he uttered the word 'Orissa.' I cannot forget that scene. I wish to discharge the debt of my obligation to that great soul and to the country in which I have made my home. Will you not help me, uncle dear, in this great work of my life ? While writing this letter, I am thinking of my life in Patna where I was happy for fifteen years with you all. With your help and influence I became a power in Patna. You gave me the proud privilege and honour of becoming the first woman honorary magistrate in India. I do not think any woman in any province enjoyed so much privilege

and distinction as I had in your province, where you and your people without distinction of caste, creed, sex and nationality helped me by giving me votes against a candidate who was their own relative and friend. Can I forget those happy days of my election campaign ? Though a Bihari to the backbone, you showed no provincialism in my case. But now why have you and your people become so clannish ? I am referring to Seraikela and Kharswan. It was my father's dream that all the Feudatory States of Orissa should be merged in Orissa proper. That great dream was realised when the country became free and the Congress Party assumed power. But why these two States were kept separate and merged with Bihar afterwards is not understood. Whether these states remained with Orissa or Bihar was of no interest to Sardar Patel or Pandit Nehru, but to please one Bihari of the High Command and to please you – so our people say – these States have been added to your province. The province of Bihar, as it is, quite big and rich in itself and you do not need these two States to enrich you further. Bihar and Orissa were joined with Bengal for a long time and we all know how Bihar and Orissa suffered under that administration. Then it became our lot to be separated from Bengal and work together. Your province is like an elder sister to Orissa. They were separated in 1936 for their own welfare and development. I believed that with this separation we did not lose the love and sympathy of our foster sister and that we had good will towards each other. But since my arrival here, I am shocked to learn from statements in the papers and from victims from Seraikela and Kharswan that the atrocities and barbarism with which the unfortunate Oriya people in these States are repressed are such that they make even my cold blood now run hot. It seems they have beaten even the atrocities committed under the State Government. What have these innocent people done to be the victims of such authoritative terrorism, hooliganism and exploitation by the Congress government in Bihar ? Is it their fault that they do not wish to be "Biharised" but continue to read and converse in their own mother tongue? You are a great leader of Bihar and you have great influence over Sri Krishna Sinha and Sri Krishna Ballav and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Why can't you put a stop to these atrocities and use your great influence to give back to Orissa these to States which rightly belong to Orissa ? Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel would not stand against this decision of yours, I am sure.

You know I am a fighter. I appeal to you to do justice to Orissa and I feel sure I do not appeal in vain. If, however, you fail to help me, I shall come up to Patna, stay in your house and be a plague to you (you always called me a plague of your life, yet loved me) until you give in.

Apart from my pleading to you from Orissa, let me plead to you from the side of Bihar. For a great intellectual like you, no special emphasis from me is necessary to realise that your atrocious acts in Seraikela and Kharswan is tarring the fair name of the Bihar government for just administration. Injustice and repression defeat their own ends. The more you go on in this way, the worse will be the case for Bihar.

I would also like to remind you that the first resolution in the Central Assembly for consolidation of the Orissa Province was moved by you. I, therefore, know how in your hearts there is genuine love for Orissa and pride on account of its progress and well-being.

So the fact is that I, as a lover of both Bihar and Orissa, am pleading to you, who is equally a lover of both to do justice in interests of both the sisters, Bihar and Orissa ; so that peace and good will between them may be restored. So uncle dear, please help me in this great mission of my life.

I hope you are keeping well. I am looking forward to meeting you some time in the cold weather.

With my affectionate regards and good wishes for your robust health and long life,

Your affectionate niece,

S.B.Das

Dr. Sacchidananda Sinha, Bar-at-Law.

Sinha Library Road,

Patna.

Third Letter

Sinha Library Road

Post Box No. 62 G.P.O.

Patna

The 11th September, 1949

My Dear Shoila,

Yesterday afternoon I received your kind and affectionate letter (without date) and hasten to send you a short reply, as, for reasons I shall presently explain, I am not in a position to send you a long one. You have written a great deal recalling your very happy life at Patna, where you justly occupied a very prominent position in the civic life of the city. I had advised you repeatedly not to return to Calcutta or Cuttack, but to stay here permanently. But you decided to take your own line in the matter, and I have no grievance or compliant against you for your having done that. At the same time I fully realise that you must be feeling very lonely at Cuttack now, especially that your dear sister had passed away. As regards myself, you do not perhaps know of the very serious nature of my illness which began in the third week of last October with an attack of influenza, and which continued till the end of March and from which even now I have not yet fully recovered, though I am much better. But I do not grumble as I know that many other people at my time of life (78) are even in a worse condition than I am. I hope for the best and keep myself ready to obey the call of Providence when he chooses to call me.

Owing to the state my health I have not taken any part in public affairs for quite a long time. I presided as the first President of the Constituent Assembly of India in December 1946, since which time I have not been able to attend a single day's session of the Assembly. You will thus see that I am completely out of touch with anybody in Delhi, whether the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister, or anyone else. Occasionally I receive and reply to a letter from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, that is all. In writing to me, therefore, on the subject of the two Singhbhum district States and their merger, you have been wrongly advised to approach me. This is a matter with which I have absolutely no concern. If things really be half so bad as you have tried to depict them, I confess I do not understand why your Prime Minister cannot represent them to the Deputy Prime Minister Delhi, or even to the Prime Minister of Bihar ? In any way, I am in no way concerned with this particular matter, and I very much fear those who advised you to write to me such a long letter, about a matter with which I have absolutely no concern, put you, my dear niece, on the wrong track. I fear, therefore, that I am not the person who can be, for reasons stated above, of any use to you in this particular

question. But if you will do me the favour to write to me again on any matter, it goes without saying that I shall be only too happy to give it my best and most careful consideration.

Trusting all well, I remain with my blessings and good wishes,

Ever Yours affectionately,

SD, S.Sinah

Fourth Letter

Madhu Smriti

Cuttack

15th September, 1949

My Dear Uncle,

I am glad to get your letter explaining the whole situation and your position. I am very sorry I gave trouble by writing an unnecessary long letter.

You are wrong, uncle dear. No one has advised me to write to you or to others. You know your niece very well. She never listens to the advice of others if she makes up her mind to do a thing. In this case I was driven to write to you by reading the accounts in the press given by the leader of the Opposition of the Orissa Assembly and also hearing tales of woe from the victims themselves.

I do not know what action is being taken by our Prime Minister in this connection. But I have heard that a committee has been formed or is going to be formed by the centre to investigate into this matter.

In acknowledging my letter, the Prime Minister of India informs me that appropriate action will be taken.

I am very angry with you for not having written to tell me of your serious illness since October last. I hope it is not your heart that is troubling you and I hope you are much better now.

I do not know what you will say when I tell you that I have already offered my house in Cuttack to the people of Orissa as gift to perpetuate the memory of my late father. The Government will act as a trustee, with several conditions. The papers are all with the Law Secretary. When I get a reply from government, I shall send you the draft deed and the reply from government, I shall send you a copy for your opinion and advice.

I am not writing a long letter to you today. When I hear I shall write to you again a letter to cheer you up.

I am still living in this world with its manifold drawbacks and ???

With my best wishes and affectionate regard.

Your affectionate niece

S.B.Das

Fifth Letter

Sinha Library Rd.

G.P.O.Box No. 52

Patna

The 18th September, 1949

My Dear Shoila,

Your kind and affectionate reply, dated the 15th September to my last letter, is welcome. I am glad you have now seen the matter, you wrote to me about, in its correct perspective. I must tell you frankly that I was distressed that you should have taken part in this wretched Bihari-Oriya controversy, without knowing all the facts and circumstances. Since I replied to your letter, the Bihar Government have issued a long communique, traversing the entire ground underlying the agitation in Orissa on the subject of the merger of the two States. I have no personal knowledge of the matter one way or the other, but the solution of the problem lies in your Prime Minister approaching either the Central government or the Bihar government. Any way, I am glad you now see things in the proper light.

I am highly gratified to learn from your letter that you have decided to make over the house as a trust for the public, and that arrangements are being made in the right and proper way for its upkeep and maintenance in public interest. I shall be obliged to you by your kindly writing to me, from time to time, and keeping me in touch with your welfare.

With my blessings and good wishes,

I remain

Yours affectionately

S. Sinha.

Sixth Letter

1st Oct. 49.

My Dear Uncle,

Thank you for your kind and affectionate letter received duly. I have also received a very kind letter from Dr. Rajendra Prasad explaining the whole question of Saraikela and Kharswan. Now when the Central Government have finally decided to merge these two states with the Bihar Government, I hope the Bihar Government will not take hard measures to make the Oriya people give up their mother tongue but treat them kindly so that I at least will have nothing to complain about the Bihar Government.

Uncle dear, I read the whole of your article in connection with the High Court Judge's removal from the Bench. It is a splendid article, very clear and to the point. Our Law Minister also told me how much he appreciated it. I wonder how you can write such lucid and intellectual articles even at this age when your health is so bad. I know you are a ery powerful writer and love writing. So please write a long letter to your niece who always reads them with great interest. Even a scolding from you is welcome.

The Womens' Conference is not going to be held in Patna this year. The women of your province had invited us, but have now backed out, so there is no prospect of my coming to Patna for the Conference. But if my uncle invites his niece, she may come and be his guest for a week or two, otherwise I do not know when I shall meet you. The doctor advised me to have my contract operated and I am going to have it done in the cold weather.

Trusting you are keeping well. With my love, kind regards, and best wishes for my dear Uncle.

Your affectionate niece,

Shoila

Dr. Sachidananda, Sinha

Sinha Library Road

Patna

Sinha Library Rd.
G.P.O. Box No. 52
Patna
The 4th October, 1949

My Dear Shoila,

Your kind and affectionate letter of the 1st is most welcome, and I highly appreciate all that you have said in it in connection with my articles, about which I have received numerous letters from various sources, including the Governor-General of India and Dr. Sir Hari Singh Gour.

As regards the two States merged in Bihar, I knew that so far back as January last, they had been merged definitely and finally by Sardar Patel in Bihar, and there was absolutely no chance of the question being re-opened, but then a large section of the people of Orissa were hoping against hope that they would get them back, as they are hoping against hope that they would get the whole of the Singhbhum district (in which these two States are situated) merged in Orissa. As a matter of fact, these two States are not Orissa States at all in any sense, but they are Adibasi States ; the bulk of the population in both of them consisting of Adibasis. The Bihar Government have done nothing to suppress Oriya for any purpose, whatsoever, nor will they do so in future. You need not, therefore, worry yourself about it any longer.

Lastly, I am not surprised to learn what you have said about the Women's Conference, nor am I a bit sorry. When you invited the Conference, twenty years or so back from now, it was a grand success by reason of your own efforts, but there is no such prospect now as Patna does not possess, amongst its women citizens, any one of your enthusiasm, ability, and energy. So it was bound to be a failure, and I am not at all unhappy that it is not going to be held here.

Hoping to hear from you in due course and at your leisure and convenience, and trusting all well, I remain, with my blessings and good wishes.

Yours affectionately
S.Sinha.

Seventh Letter

Home Department

Cuttack, the 15th October, 1949

D.O. No. 18778A

Dear Miss Das,

I return the papers which you very kindly sent to me. Your correspondence with different authorities on the question of Seraikela and Kharswan is worthy of the daughter of Madhusudan Das.

With best writes,

Yours sincerely,

N.Senapati

Miss. S.B. Das,

Madhusmriti,

Eighth Letter

Office of the Hon'ble Premier, Orissa

Dated Cuttack, the 3rd September 1949

D.O. No. 4717, H.P.

Dear Madam,

I am desired to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 31.8.49 to Hon'ble Premier enclosing copies of two letters addressed to Hon'ble Prime Minister, India and Deputy Prime Minister, Hon'ble Sardarji and to convey you his thanks for the same.

Hon'ble Sri Mahtabji eulogistically further observes that the letter proves the maxim, "Worthy daughter of the Worthy Father."

Yours sincerely,

P.Tripathi

Secretary to Hon'ble Premier

Miss. S.B. Das,

Madhu Smriti,

Cuttack.

CHAPTER VIII

(A) RAJA SAILENDRA NARAYAN BHANJ DEO OF KANIKA

I find in my book that I have forgotten to mention many things about my "Baby," Readers, you must be wondering how a Raja's son can be my "Baby." I am going to tell you here how he became my "Baby."

The old Raja and my late father were great friends. The Raja lost his first three children before the birth of "Baby", and sought my father's advice as he was keen in having a child. My father told him that he must have a Civil Surgeon, an English Nurse at the time of "Baby's" birth and he made necessary arrangements.

One early morning in September, 1908, a messenger from the Raja's house came and informed that a son was born. At 4 o'clock in the morning my father and I went to see the baby boy. It is a custom in many houses where they lose infants, they sell their child to a person feeling that the child's life would be saved, and so this baby was sold to me for only three "kaudis', and since then he became my "Baby." I used to look after him, and give direction to his Nurse. When he was one year old I brought him to my house where he lived till he was 6 years old. When he just started uttering words, he called me "Pa-pa." This word is an abbreviation of "Baba." He learnt this word from the servant. When I went to the Raja's house the servants used to say to the Baby "Miss baba is coming." He could not say "Miss", but he used to say "Papa." I am always fond to children and I loved the Baby like my own child. He went with me everywhere. His parents had every confidence in me and seeing that the Baby is so attached to me they left him altogether to my care. The poor child suffered a great deal from bronchitis. Sometimes he would have three attacks a month. In 1913 (I may be mistaken in the year) my father went to Delhi for the Imperial Council and I went with him to Delhi but the Baby would not stay behind and I had to take him with me to Delhi where he became so ill that my father sent us down to Calcutta. The eminent physicians in Calcutta advised me to take him to Simla to get rid of the bronchitis. I took him to Simla, with his mother and there he was cured.

When he went to the Stewart School he lived in his own house at Kanika Rajbati and used to come to me daily. When I went to Patna I did not see my "Baby" for many years. He was a most loveable child and hardly gave me any trouble.

I will narrate something which will amuse you all to know how my Baby's brain worked. He was only four years old I used to make him say prayer before going to bed.

One night he asked me "are all little children going to bed at 7 o'clock offering prayer to God"? I said "Yes." Then he said, "Papa I will not say my prayer now, for God will not know who is Baby, because all other children will say prayer, so I shall say afterwards," He wanted me to stay with him a little longer and tell stories and did not like to go to sleep. This little Baby from his childhood had self-respect. Here is another story of his childhood.

He had his governess, his tutor who used to take him out for a morning ride in Simla Hills. He would not like to dress so early and used to kick his bearer when he wanted to dress him. So I told the bearer that he should box his ear if he did it again. The servant followed my advice. Next morning Baby howled and cried aloud and went to his mother to complain, but his mother was a very good woman. She knew the value of discipline. She told her son that he should not have kicked the servant. The case was dismissed. Never again he kicked the servant.

When I was in trouble with my younger brother J.C. Hazra, he helped me. In order to get out of the clutches of my brother I sold both my houses 70A and 70B Chuckerebere Road North, Calcutta to my Baby and his wife, but in 1954 when I wanted to re-purchase the houses in order to give shelter to my brother and his family at 70B Chuckerebere Road, Baby allowed me to re-purchase the house. But before he sold the houses to me, he advised me not to buy the house, but to take the house for my life and after my death, he would have it again. I regret I did not take his offer. I wanted to possess the house for the brother and his family to live there after my death and this house has brought trouble to me again.

I gave "Baby" my first name "Shoila' and he is named Sailendra Narayan Bhanj Deo. He is quite different from his class, most generous at heart, simple and honest, no vices except smoking (if you call it a

vice). He is fond of books and has an interest on various subjects from flood control to Jail reform. He has a scientific bent of mind. His hobby is boat building and sailing. He is not fond of any other amusements. He has three sons and is a very loving father and is most attached to his wife and very generous.

He is a great help to me in my old age – and I still call him, "my Baby" and love him as my own child.

(B) DR. HARE KRISHNA MAHTAB

While dealing with my activities in and outside the Council of Sate, I may mention about Dr. Hare Krishna Mahtab who was the Premier of Orissa.

While he was the Premier I had many fights with him, but I always found him just and reasonable. He helped me in various ways to redress wrongs done to others. It was really a misfortune for Orissa when he left Orissa for the Govt. of India.

I met him again in 1952 in Parliament House when he was a member of the Lok Sabha. Many a time when I needed his help and advice, I found in him a good friend. Now when he is the Governor of Bombay, with many calls on his time and attention, I find him the same 'Mahtab'- the kind and considerate brother of your, and I know I can always count on his help in my old age.

CHAPTER IX

COMEDY OF ERRORS

All my life I have been seriously ill off and on. I fell ill, I suffered and I got well. For a few months I would be quite ill. Then doctors would set me right again. My horoscope says I shall never be quite a healthy person but by taking care of my health I shall live long. It seems that my horoscope is right. In 1942 I had two major operations and was almost on the point of death. Thrombosis of the legs troubles me off and on. But since 1948 there have been several comedy of errors in my life through eminent specialists. I have suffered greatly from cough. It was a chronic cough. I have suffered from this cough off and on for the last thirty

years. The blame was mine. With a bad throat I daily took plenty of acid things. In September 1949 the cough was so severe and continuous that I was very bad. I had such violent spasms which shook my whole frame. I was then taken to the Nursing Home in the Cuttack General Hospital and eminent doctors attended me. Every medicine was given a trial with no success. Penicillin was injected with no result. I was taken to Calcutta to find out the real cause. Examinations of my chest, lungs, heart and throat revealed nothing. I was examined by several specialists and they also found nothing specially wrong. I was sent to Seva Sadan for X'Ray plates of my heart, chest and lungs, Several plates were taken. When the plates were shown to the specialists, they at last made the discovery that there was Anuerism of the Aorta (i.e. the aorta, the main artery of the heart, was slightly elongated at the base and had formed a pouch). I was told that my days were numbered and I had to get ready for my last journey. Doctors advised me to lead a quiet life, no worry, no excitement and no exertion, no work, and no talking. I went to a very renowned physician and after his careful examination, I put a question to him "You are a well known physician can you not repair me"? He looked at me and said "Impossible, how can I give green shoots to an old tree ?" "Then what can you do for me ?" I asked. "I can only advise and perhaps alleviate your pain. Don't use your lungs too much," he replied. Inspite of his warning I am still using my energy and my lungs too much. I am very much alive. I have proved that all the doctors were wrong. Seeing me and my energy and my sound health they now say "There cannot be anuerism of Arota."

Another comedy of errors. In Nov. 1950 I felt a lump in my abdomen and some discomfort. I called an eminent surgeon. He also felt a lump, but he asked me to have X'Ray plates. Seva Sadan took some plates which revealed nothing. Then I went to a famous gynecologist. He suspected a tumour as big as a tennis ball which must be removed without delay. Then I consulted another physician he felt something bigger than a tennis ball which must be removed. Then I decided to remove the tumour as it would get malignant if I kept it in my stomach. A homely doctor came and examined me very thoroughly but he could find nothing. Very humbly he said "As I am nobody, I better take you to somebody whose opinion is worth having." So he took me to an expert who has

international reputation. He examined me thoroughly and said "There is no tumour." I said "Will you please write it down for me?" He did so. I gladly pocketed the paper and kept it for future reference, I wanted to find out from the other experts and so I got myself admitted to the P.G. Hospital for final examination under anesthetic. Here I had a very pleasant time. I knew there would be no operation as there was no tumour. I had a nice room to myself, fairly decent food, a number of patients to talk to, visitors and friends to sympathise. What more did I want ? I passed my days very happily trying to serve other patients. Whenever the doctor would come I had a plea ready for him to make him depart in peace. After fourteen days I submitted to a gas examination. Then they too discovered that I had nothing worthy of an operation. I had three more days of grace to while away my time in the hospital, then I left it with regret.

A Russian fortune-teller has written out my horoscope. He gives me 90 years of easy life. I am now 81-strong, hale and hearty. I may even prove the Russian a false prophet and live to 100 as my friends want me to. It gave me great pleasure to prove that every one was in the wrong. Life is indeed a comedy of errors.

CHAPTER X

HOW I CAME TO BE A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATES

In the winter of 1951 Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Rashtrapati visited Cuttack and stayed at the Raj Bhawan. There was as usual a big reception for him at the Raj Bhawan when all the local dignitaries, officials and others were invited to meet the President. The Raj Bhawan is an old house dating back to the Marhatta times. It is situated on the bank of the Kathjuri river which is a tributary of the Mahanadi river. The Raj Bhawan grounds are pretty and the reception was in the open air, beautiful shamiana was put up with cushioned chairs and sofas inside. The Governor and the President sat on a big sofa specially kept for them and the guests were taken in from time to time to pay their respects to the distinguished guest of the evening. Ministers and a few higher officials also sat in side the shamiana.

I was taken in by the Governor's Secretary to meet the Rashtrapati. When I was introduced he said. "I know Miss Das very well ; she is an old friend of mine." I was asked by him to sit near him on the sofa. In the meantime, Sri Biswanath Das, ex-Premier of Orissa and President of the Congress Pradesh Committee came in, took a chair and sat down facing us and began to talk about the coming election. I was asked by the President whether I was going to stand for the Parliament or·Assembly. I said : "What is the use of standing when your Congress will not have me. I have my past experience of the Congress people here," the Governor then said : "Miss Das, you never told me that you would like to stand." "Your Excellency" said I "perhaps you do not know how the Congress treated me in the past. After giving me hopes of sending me to the legislature they did not vote for me. Naturally, I don't trust them any more." Then Sri Biswanath Das thought that he must save himself and the party from my just accusation. He said : "Miss Das is our eldest sister and we all want her to live long. We do not want her to enter into our dirty politics as we respect her too much. Therefore we did not send her name. It would only injure her health." I smiled at it and said : "It was indeed generous of the President of the O.P.C.C. to think about my health with such concern. But where was he when I was dying in 1950 ? He never cared to enquire once about my health." Both the President and the Governor had a good langh over it.

In the Orissa Assembly there were 140 seats. Panditji was always asking the voters to send a large number of women to the Legislatures. He also insisted that honesty and integrity of character should have priority in the selection of candidates. I was very much encouraged by the statements of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru. I wanted to get at least half a dozen women of Orissa into the State Legislature and two women into the Parliament. I saw the Chief Minister Shri Naba Krushna Chaudhury more than once and asked him to select some women. He told me that there was no woman fit to be a member of the Assembly much less to represent in the Parliament, and emphatically refused to select women for that purpose. You, my reader, must have seen from my memoirs that I never take a "No" from anybody. Once I make up my mind to do a thing I will have it done. I was determined to have at least one woman in the Orissa Assembly and one in the Parliament also. So I wrote to the

Prime Minister who was also the President of the Congress Party, blaming the Pradesh Committee for its attitude and asking him whether he would support my candidature to the Council of States, and of the Rajmata of Ranpur for the Orissa Assembly. In my letter to him I stated that it seemed as if non-party women, whatever their experience and record of their service for the country did not have a place under the new regime. I also pointed out that if these women became disappointed and joined other parties in the country such as the Communist, the blame will have to be borne by the Congress alone. Pandtiji did justice to my letter. He approved of the Rajmata's candiature and I found that the O.P.C.C. had also sent my name to the Central Parliamentary Board for the Council of States. Thus I was doubly approved by the State as well as the Central Committee and I became a Congress candidate. However, I was not a ful-fledged party member; neither did I wear Khaddar. I wanted to become a Congress party member after seeing whether the Government was better than the British Government. The elections were held in March 1952.

The Orissa Assembly had 70 Congress Members and the State was entitled to send 9 members to the Council of States. The Congress party's quota was five members and I was one of the five. I was duly elected and in May 1952 the newly elected Parliament met. I went to Delhi two days before the opening of the Parliament and stayed at the Western Court. It is a most imposing building housing many of the members of the Parliament. I did not know any member except Shri C.C. Biswas who as also staying there. In course of time I met other members Srimati Violet Alva from Bombay, Srimati Lilavati Munshi from Bombay and U.P., Srimati Mona Hensman from Madras, Begam Aizaz Rasul from U.P., Pushpalata Das from Assam, Mayadevi Chattry from West Bengal and many others. Shri Biswas gave me and Mayadevi a lift in his car on the opening day. As we were late in arriving I found all the seats occupied. While looking for a seat, Shri Mahtab and Doctor Katju came out of their seats and talked to me. Shri Mahtab introduced me to Dr. Katju although there was no need to do so and said that I was 90 years old. Nobody would believe it and everybody laughed at the suggestion. In the meantime Panditiji arrived and joined us and when he was told I was 90 years old he put his hand on my shoulder and said "I

know Miss Das' age. She is the oldest member of the House, and therefore the Grandmother of the House." From that day I was looked upon as Grandmother and everybody called me "Granny," although some of my grandchildren have reached their biblical age of three score years and ten.

Before the President of the Republic arrived, I was able to find a seat somewhere. The opening of the Parliament was a great event and it was also a most imposing one. In the profound silence of the well-filled central hall, the President of the Republic, accompanied by the Speaker of the House of the People and the Chairman of the Council of States moved slowly to the platform and took his place in the chair. The address was delivered in both English and Hindi and took a little more than half an hour. Immediately after the President left the Hall while all of us stood and greeted him, we came home. Next day at 10 a.m. we were all sworn in. Thus began my two years of membership in the Council of States and Parliamentary life.

On the following day we began the debate on the President's address. Before the debate began the Chairman was felicitated and many members spoke on the occasion. I too wanted to say a few words but failed to catch the Chaiman's eye. The debate on the motion of thanks to the President on his address was initiated by Dewan Chamanlal and seconded by Begam Aiziz Rasul. The Opposition started its volley of criticism. I did not like the stand taken by the Opposition nor did I understand why there should be so much discussion on the President's address which seemed quite a reasonable statement of policy. I was sitting on the Congress bench with my colleagues and we had a good view of the Chairman, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The debate went on for three days when the general debate on the Railway Budget began with more talk and abuse by the Opposition and defence of policies of the Government by the spokesmen of the Treasury benches, involving enormous waste of public funds. By the end of June, the session of the Council of States was adjourned and we did not reassemble till July.

We met again in July to continue the debate on the Budget. Shri Sundarayya, the leader of the Communist Party criticised the Government mercilessly on its industrial policy and made certain constructive suggestions as well. These latter related to the promotion and development

of indigenous industries. I was quite in agreement with his views ; so I left my seat and went to the Minister of Industry and Commerce who was sitting on the Treasury Bench and asked him how he liked Shri Sundarayya's speech. He simply said "Not bad." I asked : "Will you accept his constructive suggestions ? If you do will you refer to them in your reply ?" No doubt he was surprised at my boldness. As I was used to it I did not feel any nervousness in talking to him in the way I did. He then asked me if I would like to speak on the subject so that he should send my name to the Chairman. I pleaded ill health as I was far from well at that time and requested him to speak on my behalf. Then I asked him, "When you consider a speech good why can't you say yourself in your speech that you will consider the suggestions so that you may rise in the estimation of the Opposition. To err is human" I said " but to acknowledge one's mistake is a sign of greatness. So please do it." "Very good" he said and in his reply he made certain comments on the suggestions of the Opposition.

Owing to my indifferent and ill-health my participation in debates of the Council of States was limited to questions and two speeches. But I always took interest in the proceedings of the Council and the progress of the various Ministries. I used my time after the question hour to meet the Ministers and their deputies and give them my suggestions. As an experienced public worker and seasoned fighter, I knew perhaps better than many of my colleagues how to get things done. Personally I did not attach much value to making speeches, producing and repeating arguments and thus wasting public money. But I took great interest in sending questions which when asked and answered in the Parliament, focussed public attention and put the Ministry on the spot. And it is the ambition of every Ministry to appear in their best colours, although they often fail miserably. The question hour is also the most exciting and interesting time when the House is always well attended.

Instead of covering the entire field of Government's activities I generally confined myself to questions relating to my State and such other subjects of vital interest to the people of our country, such as education, natural resources, rehabilitation, income tax, health and industrial development of course, whenever I could put in a supplementary question affecting the welfare of my State, I was alert enough not to miss the

occasion. On two occasions, however I took part in the debate. These were on the Estate Duty Bill in 1953 and the Budget in 1954. As I am always in the habit of calling a spade a spade I did not hesitate to speak my mind as to the experience I had gathered in the House during the past two years of my membership in the Council of States. The two speeches given in the Appendix will show to the reader that I was not actuated by any malice, nor was I trying to carry favour with any party or individual. My sole object was to bring to the notice of the Government the honest opinion of a member, who sincerely felt that the Congress Party should not lose its ground but that it would go on losing its hold on the people if there sufferings are not alleviated in the quickest possible time, and the honesty of administration brought home to the people by the elimination of corruption. Although my speeches were delivered extempore they were the result of constant thought and concern for the welfare of our people, especially women and children. From the applause they evoked in the House it was evident they were appreciated.

All along my life I knew that more work could be done by tackling each problem separately and with the individuals. When the Commission for Secondary Education was appointed I was surprised to see that there was only one woman member. I approached Sri Kabir of the Education Ministry to appoint one more. Sri Kabir told me that Finance would not grant funds for that, but if I could persuade the Finance Minister he would certainly add another. I promised to get it done when he smiled knowing that it would be tough job. One of Mr. Deshmukh's friends told me that he would be interested to know the result of the interview as he was sure it would not succeed. I was perfectly sure that I would be able to convince the Finance Minsiter and convert him to my views. So I made an appointment and went to see him. He said, on seeing me, that he was busy and would be able to give me only 15 minutes. But the interview lasted for an hour and fifteen minutes. I opened the conversation by saying "Mr. Desmukh, you are such a handsome man, why shouldn't you do – handsomely by women ?" – He looked shy, smiled a little, perhaps surprised at the flattery coming from an old woman like me. But I am sure he liked it; and when I asked him why he did not grant funds to include another woman on the Commission, he said that Education Ministry did not press for a second woman and therefore it was wrong on their

part to say that he did not allow it. He then said, "Why do you want to have a second woman member ? Is it for equality ?" I said "No, one woman's view may not be accepted, whereas there is every likelihood of the views of two women being considered." Then he asked me why I did not go to Mr. Tyagi who was then the Deputy Finance Minister. To which question I said, "When I can go to the fountainhead why should I go to the branch." We started on different topics and he was very curious to know how I came to know so much about departments and files. Indeed he seemed so interested that he made me talk to him for more than an hour when I gave him some of my experiences in the field of public work. He promised to help me with funds for an additional member for the Commission and asked me to get the Education Ministry to send a name. Thus I had my fist interview with the Finance Minister which was a success. But then the Education Minister failed me ; he did not want to reopen the subject, I do not know for what valid reasons. I had another interview with the Finance Minister immediately after my speech on the Estate duty Bill. He congratulated me on my speech.

Now I want to say something about the Education Minister. He is an old man. He talks little and when he does he talks in Urdu. I went to see him to get funds, as I wanted 2 lakhs of rupees for the construction of a hall for the Shoilabala Women's College which is the only State College for women in Orissa. After hearing me, he said in Urdu that it was impossible for Government to grant any funds for construction purposes. I went to him with such hopes, but hearing him I was heart-broken. I asked him if he could give me 15 minutes time to hear all about the state of girls' education in Orissa. I briefly narrated the history of the first girls' school, training institution and women's college which were sponsored by me under great difficulties. I told him that I was not a Congress party member but I made over my house as a gift to the Government. I asked him that if one woman could do so much for the State cannot she have any claim on the Centre for help ? The old man said, "I am very pleased to learn of all your work. Ask your Government to make an application for 2 lakhs of rupees stating all your activities in the field of education". I thanked him for his sympathy and came away with great hopes. I at once wrote to my State Government to send an application immediately. But as it is, the State Government took 6 months

to send an application and when Dr. S.S. Bhatnagar met me to discuss the point, he said he was sympathetic but could not find his way to provide money for construction. I told him that he was throwing cold water on my project instead of helping it, although the Minister himself was very sympathetic. He of course insisted that he was also sympathetic, but the Government cannot give grants to institutions of higher education except through the University Grants Commission. He however drafted a letter for me to send to the State Government, but our University made a mistake, did not put its claim strongly but in such a lukewarm fashion that nobody could give a grant of 2 lakhs on its letter. So it was through the fault of my State Government that I could not realise my dream.

I am very much interested in industries, not the big ones, but the cottage industries. My late father started many industries to help small craftsmen and ruined himself by handling such matters without Government support. Nevertheless I was impressed by the need for developing them. In Cuttack there is Poor Cottage Industry started by a single individual. In this he utilised all village and waste products and made beautiful things which are useful and cheaper than what one gets in the market. He gets little support from the government. As the man is old I felt that after his death his life-work will perish like my father's. So I wanted to help him and found that being a member of the Council of States I could help through the ministers. I asked the Minister concerned either to take up the whole enterprise or give him a rolling capital of 30,000 rupees so that he could improve the industry. He said he would give me a reply after one week with regard to the capital and asked me to ask the proprietor of the concern to send an application through the State Government. But, my reader, I cannot make my State Government work faster than they are habituated. After a great deal of trouble, discussion and fighting, the application eventually reached the Centre and a sum of Rs. 45,000 was sanctioned ; but to get this grant from the State Government took 6 months and the money was given on the last day of March. The Poor Cottage Industry is an institution where children can be well trained for their livelihood.

I took great interest in the income-tax administration. I found that returns were submitted three years back, orders were not passed. Thousands of cases were pending for want of Income Tax officers. I

worried the Finance Minister with questions that he should send officers to finish arears of work. I really feel glad that some of my lawyer friends were benefited by my activities.

Whenever there is any problem in Orissa it was brought to my notice so that I may take it up with the Centre. In this way I had much pleasure in coming into contact with the various Ministers. On some occasions I gained my point. At other times I had to content myself with their agreement to consider them.

I can say without hesitation that during my 2 years in the Council, I have learnt many things and watched carefully the debates of the House as well. I felt the Council of States is only wasting money.

CHAPTER XI

ACTIVITIES INSIDE THE COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE

When I became a member of the Council of State, I was staying at Western Court, the Caterer of the House came and asked me whether I had any fault to find with his food, and if not to sign my name in his book, though I was not quite pleased with the food yet I signed "No Complaint" as others did. Two weeks after, another caterer came to me and said that he was appointed Caterer of the Western Court, and had got an appointment letter from the Estate Officer on the strength of that appointment letter he had invested five to six thousand rupees in getting stores, crockery and appointment of servants. But four days before taking charge, he was told by the Estate office that his appointment was cancelled as the members of Parliament were satisfied with the old caterer, the man was in great distress as it meant a heavy financial loss to him. I felt the injustice of the case keenly. I took up his case to fight it out in the cause of justice. I wrote to the Estate Officer pointing out that as proper notice was not given to this man in due time canceling the appointment, and as the man had invested a great deal of money, his appointment should stand, as otherwise I would take up his case to the Honourable Minister. As a result of my letter, the new Caterer was appointed. I have always found out that whenever, I approached the Head, I had no complaint to make and my prayer was always granted. Here is an incident with the

Law Minister. From each State some Law Officers from the Secretariat were taken to the Centre for Training, my State (Orissa) had not been able to get its quota for a long time, I approached Sri C.C. Biswas the Law Minister, and he at once passed an order. A Mohomedan, from Orissa should have the next chance to come to the Centre for Training. Here is some interesting incidents with the Home Minister Sri Sirdar Sing. An old lady after getting an extension for a year to work in a Government Hostel was refused further extension. She was in distress and financially badly off, and to crown it all she had a dumb son on her shoulder, she came to me to help her, I did not know how to help her. I know how to fight, but not to ask a favour. Here I was to ask a favour from our Home Minister. The old lady started crying, but I told her I could not help her. However, in the end I promised to speak on her behalf to the Minister and get her the desired extension in her service. When I went to the Council I met Sardarji and told him he must help the "granny" by promising to give her what she wanted. He asked me "What is it ?" I told him about this lady and asked him to give her an extension for a year. He said he was sorry as he was contemplating a young person in her place, but as I pressed the matter very much and would not take a refusal, he gave her an extension of 6 months. This made the old lady happy.

Now I must say something of my Railway Minister, who is a dear grandson, very simple and honest. When be came to Cuttack in the summer of 1954, I asked him to give me 25 free passes, for the girls of Shoila Bala College to travel to have experience and knowledge. The Railway Board refused by saying that the concession is already given to the school children. They can have a double journey by paying single fare and he asked me not to press him in this matter. But my reader when I make up my mind to get a thing for a good cause, I do not like to take a refusal. So I told my Railway Minister, Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri that "Granny must have a special concession for her girls and you cannot refuse her." My reader what do you think ? The dear Minister granted my request and his General Manager sent me 25 free passes. The Lady Principal made all arrangements to send our girls to Sindri, Chittaranjan and other places. My state Finance Minister, Sri Radhanath Rath, who is also my grandson, sanctioned Rs. 2/- per head per day for each girl. The girls had 10 days outing. I was told by some important railway officials

that never before such passes were given to anyone. During my 2 years in the Council of State there were many such small incidents.

During my two years in the Council of State I made two speeches one on the State Duty and the other during the Budget Session. I criticised the panel of the Social Welfare Board and my suggestions were accepted and the State Social Welfare Board has been started where various Social Welfare Associations send their applications which are recommended to the Central Board for grants. My two speeches will be found in the Appendix of this Book.

I am at present living in Cuttack doing social work and feeling quite happy. I have re-purchased my house in Calcutta, where I thought I shall be quite happy with my relations, friends and old surroundings and with the memory of childhood which is always present and waiting for the boat to arrive to take me across the river. But a women proposes, but God deposes. Great trouble came from the unexpected quarter and made me feel remote, unfriended and sad.

CHAPTER XII

HOW I FULFILLED MY DESTINY

My Zodiacal sign extends from 21st of March to 20th of April and this sign is the first of fiery triplicity. I was born on the 25th March 1875. As my birth planet is Aries, according to the astrological surmise associated with my birth planet, it was prophesied that I would always be inclined to look forward to a better state of things and work hard for them. That I am very sensitive and impulsive. That I am original in my views and that influence of my sign endows me with great versatality and vivacity and that will make me popular.

My readers who have gone through my reminiscences and have learnt the various activities of my life have seen how I have always given proof of enthusiasm, perseverance, execution and determination. The many changes which you have found in my life are the result of the rapid movement of my ruling planet Mars. As is natural to one who is born in my sign I have always been led to tell the plain truth on all occasions, although it might perhaps have been better to remain silent.

Being a fluent speaker and painstaking and earnest in all I did, I became quite popular among my friends and I valued friends as the years rolled on. It was prophesied that I could have a long life of three score of years and ten and even more if I lived carefully. I have now completed three score years and have added twenty-one more years to it and I am still strong and hearty. Often I have found in my life that I am at the same moment, guided by two different feelings. This according to the astrologer is due to the Sun and Moon which causes ebb and tide, having ascendancy at the same time over my life. It was also predicted that I will have poor health, and I have had ample fulfillment of this. My destiny was to have friends of high social status and to have many enemies, mostly among women, who would cause much annoyance, but would not be able to do me any harm. This has been fulfilled in my life many a time. As Mars is my zodiacal ruler, I always fought for a cause and have never been defeated. It was my destiny to always retaliate when harmed, insulted or injured. This you have seen is not correct. You have found me retaliating many a time, though I should have guarded against this. It was destined that I should always be successful and have a good business head and will therefore never be in want. It is quite true that my brains have brought me success and I have never been in want.

My astrologer says that having completed three score years and ten I would go on to live till ninety if I make good use of my gifts and opportunities. I was advised to be true to myself. I have always tried to do this and thus I have fulfilled my destiny and shall be still fulfilling it till the end of my days.

CHAPTER XIII

"REMOTE, UNFRIENDED, MELANCHOLY, SLOW"

At the age of four score and two I feel remote from all that which made my life sweet, active and happy. Now when I have nearly lost the sight of my eyes and cannot read and write properly, when my hands shake, my nerves are all bad, my heart is weak, my strength often fails and I feel lonely indeed, sitting in my own rooms at Madhu Smiriti from where my dear ones have gone before, their memories are only things left for me in the world. Looking around me I find the vast stretches of

active life left behind and before me empty stretches, having traveled far far away from all that made for joy and happiness. I am alone still, fighting for a just cause, working for the good of others. Everything has gone out of my life leaving only memories behind. These bring melancholy and emptiness. The reminiscences of the past are always before me creating a big void and making me indeed feel remote, melancholy and unfriended. But in spite of these all, I thank God for all His manifold blessings in my life and His grace which upholds and strengthens me in my lonely old age. I still feel that life means work and work means life. So long as God keeps me here I believe He will give me strength to work.

CHAPTER XIV

WAITING FOR THE TOLLING OF THE BELL

At this advanced age one cannot but wait for the call from above, which no doctor or science can prevent. I do not know how long I shall have to wait for the tolling of the bell, but when it does toll, I hope I shall be ready for it . In the meantime let me continue to fulfil my destiny and do the work nearest at hand.

"Sunset and evening star and one clear call for me

and may there be no moaning of the bar when I put out to sea."

APPENDIX I

(Extracts from letters of Shri Madhusudan Das to his daughter Shoila Bala Das England, 1906-07)

PREFACE

A great mission of Mr. Das's life was to awaken the spirit of nationalism in the people of Orissa, and in this mission he believed his daughter could render him real help. With a view to equip her for this important yet difficult work he sent her to England when she was in weak health in September, 1906. The main object of her visit to England was to have an idea of the system of education followed there to equip women for their proper of activity in society. Her father was very fond of her and her indifferent health in a foreign country made him extremely anxious. The letters which he wrote to her were full of concern and advice and love for her. Each letter is a valuable gem, it is possible here to give only a few extracts.

Cuttack,

Orissa, India

11 September,, 1906.

First Letter

(This letter shows her father's anxiety on account of her health in not hearing from her the full account of her voyage).

My Darling Child,

I got your telegram from Aden at 2 a.m. of the 6th instant. I had no sleep that day. The expectation of getting news of you on the following day (for the steamer was due at Aden on the 7th) increased my anxiety and brought on sleepessness. I got your wire, but it was a disappointment I lost my faith in the usefulness of Cook's Unicode. It is good for purposes of business, but is of no use where feelings are concerned. I was anxious to know (1) whether you were sea-sick, if so, whether the sea sickness prevented you from taking any food and drove you to starvation ; (2) whether your general health has improved or gone down. These are questions which constantly rose and still rise before my mind and keep up a high state of feverish anxiety which I fear I shall have to bear till I get your letter. I sent a wire to you to Port Said. I hope you will get it and

I hope also you will adopt usual language in replying to it. In future whenever you have occasion (which God forbid) to wire me about your health, please adopt plain language as will give me a definite idea of your ailments. When I wire to you to allay my anxiety even when such anxiety arises from mere imagination I beg of you not to keep me in the dark and not to give me any false information.

* * * *

I am anxious and will be anxious to know how the climate treats you and how the environments of your new student life and the demands of the College rules upon your time, attention and temperament harmonize with your preconceived ideas and ambition of that life.

* * * *

Write to me a full account of all you did during the voyage, of your journey across France, of your experience of English Channel which is an introduction to the restless energy which you find in the country where to the Channel is the entrance. Don't forget to consult a good doctor, a specialist and let me know the result after you have tried his prescription and advice for a few days.

I am particularly anxious to see you healthy, for without good health and a strong and robust constitution my ambition regarding your useful life in my country will be worse than a hobby. This is my only ambition now and I pray to God to grant me this boon.

* * *

Believe me

Your ever loving father

Second Letter

(Her father's humorous remarks on Cook's Unicode)

Cuttack,

Wednesday, 19th Sept. 1906

I have been most anxious all this while. I got your wire this morning at 10 a.m. You have treated me very badly. I expected to get a wire from Marseilles, that was the understanding, but evidently Chandra was right in his appreciation of your principles of economy. I expected the contents to be otherwise than I found them. I asked you most clearly, if not

solicitously, to wire to me all about your health and address. Your wire dated yesterday morning has two words ; the first is "Relix" and the other is "anxious." Your beloved code does not contain any work "Relix", it is probably "Felix" the work I sued in my wire to Port Said. Now you see my dear child you have less reason to be anxious for me than I on your account ; I am in my old environments ; whereas you are in a strange country among strangers with environments which are not in unison with the experiences of your whole life. I never had any faith in your unicode ; it is a unique code to which the keys of human language can furnish no accomplishment. Messrs Thomas Cook and Sons must have found the materials for their code, among the debris of the linguistic structure raised by our ancestors at Babel. My experience of to-day compels me to ask, request, beseech and entreat you not to use that Code unless you wish to punish me and even in that case I would prefer the Panel Code, as that is based on known logical principle.

Your ever loving father

Third Letter

Calcutta

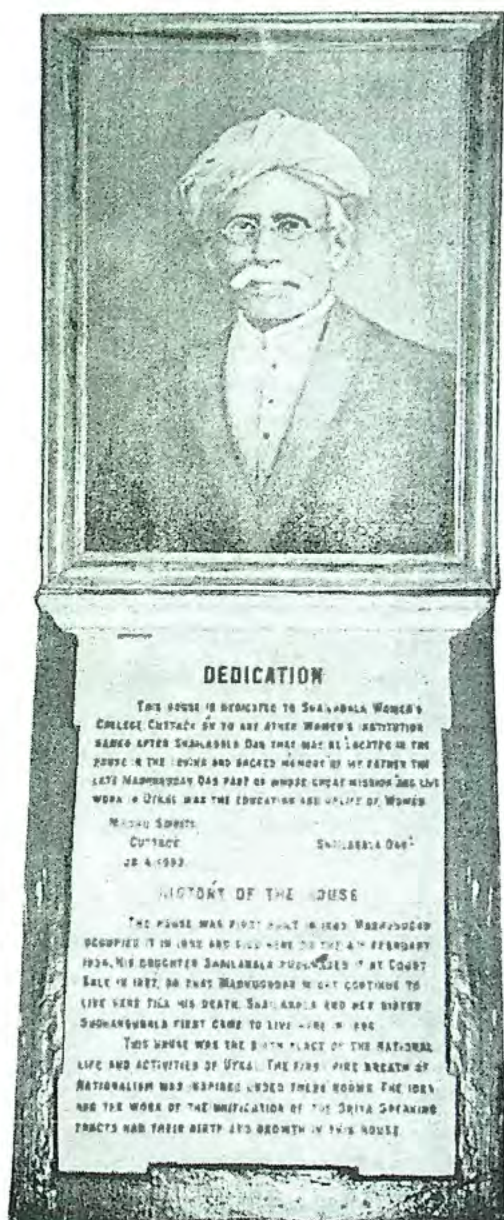
Grand Hotel,

20th September, 1906

My darling Shoila,

I know what a bad correspondent I am and how I do my best to avoid correspondence by telegram, but I have not the same feeling in your case now. I feel I could write to you a great deal more. When I begin to write I find my mind is crowded with thoughts but when I think of the distance between us 99 per cent of these thoughts appear unfit for communication as they are sure to grow unpalatable by the time they reach you, as would be a parcel of Jilipi, in response to your craving for hot Jilipis. You must be prepared for only such news as would keep long and won't get spoiled.

From your wire it seems the India Office have selected Maria Grey's Training College. I am very glad to hear it. Your College reopened yesterday and I suppose you three were there. It is difficult to picture to myself the wonder, astonishment and the curiosity which your presence among a number of English girls must have created among them. I would



ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହିଳା ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ନିମନ୍ତେ ନିଜର ବାସଭବନକୁ ଦାନ
ଦିଆଯାଇଥିବାର ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ ପତ୍ର (ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ସ୍ଥାପିତ)

not be surprised if one of them reenacted the part of the boy who on hearing the first Indian Visitor to England (Raja Ram Mohan roy) address a meeting exclaimed with a wonder-depicted face (such as a Punch artist alone could sketch) "Hallo, he speaks." I should not be surprised if some of your would-be fellow students feel a similar wonder. My dear child, remember your duty to your mother country. Do everything you can to impress all those you come in contact with, whether as friends, or as playmates, or as fellow students or as mere visitors that the Indian women possess the virtues of her sex in a degree which the English woman would do well to learn from her. Love, kindness, forbearance, charity are par excellence womanly virtues. Religion is her special sphere. In India she has upto this moment held the strongholds of superstition against the attacks of Buddhism, Mohammadanism, all-ism and no-ism. That shows her social and religious strength. Let your life shine there. In my old age I indulge in fond hopes which would appear absurd to others, but to you my sweet child they should be no secrets. May it be your share in life to elevate the Indian woman in the eyes of England. They have an idea that we treat our women as servants because they do not join us at dinners, do not take the prominent position which hostesses have in European Society. But this is a false picture which the disordered Camera of missionary reports produces. In the East the idea of honour is associated with humility and power belongs to the unostentatious. These principles, are enclosed as it were in a nut-shell in Christ washing the feet of his disciples. The European often defends woman's position in social economy by the remark that the mistress of a house takes the important position because her husband gives it to her. This is a most fallacious argument, I give here the refutation of the argument.

(1) Supposing the husband gives it, the wife would not take it if she understood the value of humility, if she understood that real power resides below the surface unnoticed. The root of a tree which feeds the tree lies below. The power of gravitation resides away from the surface of the earth. The Almighty Power is beyond the horizon of human vision.

(2) The disciples of Christ wanted to wash Christ's feet, but he did not allow them. My own opinion is that England has not yet learnt to give woman the position which the mother of a nation ought to have.

The Englishman does not give the same honour to his mother and sister and daughter that he gives to his wife. This would not be so if the position of woman were rightly understood. In India the mother stands much higher than the wife. I want you to think over these matters.

As regards dress, etc. avoid anything which tends to point to vanity. It is necessary in a foreign country to establish your respectability by dressing according to your position in the beginning. Plain dress should be used on subsequent occasions. For once your respectability is established plainness brings more honour than show.

There have been Sutee in India, but treatment like that accorded to Joan of Arc was never an Indian woman's share.

I have written to you a long letter and I hope you will not blame me for inflicting lectures on you.

With love and my blessings

Your loving

Father

Fourth Letter

(The following extract is from his letter on 23rd September 1906 that he was most anxious about his daughter's health, he was full of his usual wit and humour and writes most humorously about the High Court Judges, who were traveling with Miss Das on the same boat. There were about seven or eight of them and they all knew Miss Das and her father well.)

Cuttack,

23rd September, 1906

Fourth Letter

Dearest Child,

I have been amused by your remarks about the physical jurisdiction of the High Court Judges. I don't know whether the expression I have used is sufficiently significant. I should perhaps say muscular jurisdiction. Their work is practically an easy one, if not a pleasant one. It resembles the feat of the voracious eater, who has spread out before him a large table elaborately laden with dishes of all kinds, good bad and indifferent which a dozen of cooks have worked had to produce.

The position of a High Court Judge reminds me of the Ex-King of Oudh who had at dinner time daily brought before him hundreds of dishes served before him. These dishes were cooked by his 250 wives. It was his pleasant duty to select some out of these numerous dishes and he claimed and got more credit for this than his wives got for cooking them. The lawyers place before the judge all the facts and law connected with a case and his duty is to select and swallow some and let alone the rest. But he claims great credit for this, and in this respect he is worse than the Ex-King of Oudh, for the latter fed and clothed his wives and therefore in some sense his arrogance was pardonable, whereas a Judge does not do any such thing to a lawyer. This makes his conduct the more unpardonable. Even in this easy work of selection he errs and swallows stuff which he cannot digest and the appellate Court has to administer reproof of a very bitter kind.

Your ever affectionate

Father.

Fifth Letter

(The following extracts from his letter of the 20th October, 1906 give valuable advice to his daughter with regard to her studies and life in England and as to what should be her aims to realise the mission of her life)

Cuttack

The 20th October

Dearest Shoila,

As regards your education I should like you to learn the methods of teaching. It will be an immense gain if you can also add to your store of knowledge. If all the women of our country knew what you know we would have been a very different nation. Our educated ladies to not know to teach others of their sex what they know. Unless one knows the methods of teaching, she does not take an interest in the dissemination of her knowledge.

I have been very much interested in your description of the method of teaching followed there. I am glad you value and wish for a return of childhood to have the benefit of the system. I am really happy that you have these thoughts. That assures me of your appreciation of my object

in sending you to learn these methods for the good of our country and gives me the further assurance that you will pay attention to them.

It should be your aim to have a good reputation there. One thing you must guard against in that country and that is giving airs. The Englishman hates pride. He will not have over-bearing manners even from Edward VII and yet will do anything for a humble and weak person. You have ample proof of it in the way they value Christ's character, He was meek as a lamb, remember this always in your conduct with people.

Last night I have given most serious thoughts to the question of your residence in England. Imagined myself in your position and I shall tell you what I would have done. The first question I would have asked myself is – Can I after having been my master for so many years descend to the level of the disciplined life of a student ? I would not have allowed my mind to deceive me in the hasty excitement and momentary zeal for intellectual improvement. I would have calmly considered the conditions under which intellectual growth is possible. Is it not a fact that the children of the rich are always failures ? Why is this ? The surroundings are not favourable to intellectual growth. University education in India has been a failure. The result in the English Universities is very different. In our recent attempts to improve the education of our youths the treats stress has been laid on hostels. That is an important factor in the life of a student. The company of fellow students is a valuable stimulant in student life. Man cannot thrive in water. Fish cannot grow on dry land. The reason in both cases are unsuitable surroundings. We all draw our substance from the surroundings of our life. This is as true of moral and intellectual life as it is of physical life.

If a student spends most of his time or at least any appreciable portion of his time among people whose aim of life, however student-like in College days, is otherwise at the moment when the student seeks their company, such student is sure to go adrift from the moorings of a student. Then if I could not make up my mind to submit to or to take cheerfully to my new surroundings I would have abandoned the idea of study. I would not have given my new friends in a foreign country to understand that I came to learn, for I would fall very much in their estimation if I changed from a student visitor to England to a mere sight-seer. If my students

were poor, I would have considered it an advantage and would have made most of my advantage. I would have said to myself they are poor, but they are all intellectual, all graduates and to live two years amongst these persons, is like what living among the hills of Himalayas is to a man of the plains. I should have enjoyed the mountain air of these intellectual peaks, filled my lungs with the healthy mountain air. If the hills were bare, poor in ornaments of nature, forests and trees, I would have considered it an advantage as giving me an unobstructed view of the whole hill, as giving me easy access to every part, as giving me opportunities of examining the bare soil on which in the older hills in the same chain, tall majestic pines and oaks rear their proud heads to the clouds and I would have taken precious notes of the value of the soil.

Yours loving father.

Sixth Letter

The extract from his letter of the 20th February,1907 tells his daughter not to be under too much obligation to any one, without making suitable material expressions, of one's appreciations.

Darling Child,

I am writing to the Political A.D.C. Sir Curzon Wyllie and also to Lady Wyllie, Sir Albert and Lady Spicer, Lady Elliot Miss Samuel and Mr. Ashton thanking them for all their kindness to you. It is not desirable to carry too heavy a load of obligations in a foreign country. You are a weak little girl, unable to bear too much burden of any kind. I believe you have some Cuttack-made filigree things that will be acceptable as presents. I am also sending you some silver things by today's mail. Try to acknowledge obligations not only in words but also in suitable material expressions of the feelings. The Englishmen is a materialist, he believes in material embodiment of feelings. Feelings are worth nothing if they do not find expression in overt acts. They resemble clouds surcharged with water but do not rain. Feelings are nothing. They are fountains of action and if they do not find their way out they are dead springs. I am glad you are going to be presented to Court by Lady Spicer. Please give me a full account of the function.

Your loving father.

Seventh Letter

Extract from his letter of the 10th April, 1907

My Darling Child,

I owe an apology and an expression of regret for not having thought of you on your birthday. It is not correct to say that I did not think of you on the 25th of March, but I did not remember that that was your birthday. Not a day passes wherever I am when I do not think of you at least twenty times. I may truly in the word of the poet say "Wherever I am whatever realms to see, my heart untrammeled fondly turns to thee."

But you know my darling child I do not attach any importance to expression of feelings on particular occasions. They are like occasional thunder storms which are good when the atmosphere is charged with unhealthy gases, but a healthy atmosphere which maintains an equably healthy atmosphere does not require these occasional storms.

These occasional out-bursts of good feelings are valuable when they come from friends who have no occasion to remember you everyday. If I had remembered the day as your birthday I don't know whether I would have sent you a present, but I would have wished you many returns of it. This I do now and in doing so I wish you still longer life for to wish you many returns of 20th April means the wish for a longer life than a wish for the return of the 25th March would mean.

I hope you will accept this,

Your loving father

Eighth Letter

In his letter of the 17th April 1907 he tells her what she would speak of India in the meeting of the Drawing room of the Duchess of Warwick where she had been asked to say a few words on "India." It runs thus :-

My Darling Child,

You have been asked to speak of India. That is a big subject. You should speak mostly about Christianity and its influence in India, don't trespass in political grounds. It is dangerous and requires great tact. You should begin by referring to the great interest the Christian public in England have always shown in the well-being of the Indians. England

has spent millions in her attempts to preach Christianity in India and it must be no small source of disappointment to the numerous men and women who have given their money and energy in the cause, to find that an inappreciable portion of the population of India have accepted Christianity to this day. It is true that there is a large Christian population in India ; it is much larger than it was a quarter of a century ago; but then the population of India has increased and I should think that the proportion of the Christian to the non Christian has not gained to an appreciable extent. If we add to this the fact that the Christian population has increased by birth, there is not much to congratulate ourselves on the result if we measure the results by numerical strength of the Christian population. But to count conversion by heads is not the right way to estimate the labours of those interested in Mission work. The man who works in the field to prepare the soil is engaged in a more important work than the labourers who gather the corn. The man who is engaged in teaching the young man is engaged in a more responsible work than the man who presents the successful candidate for a degree at the Convocation. The man who breaks down and levels to the ground the fortifications which form the works of the defence of a town is deserving of more honour than the man who unfurls the national flag of the victorious army after the town is captured.

There is no doubt that the spread of English literature, Western thought and the direct teaching of the Bible have done much to prepare the minds of the nation to receive Christ at a future date. It is impossible for an Indian to dissociate Christ from all that is good and noble in English literature and history. Had not Christianity come to England, England would not have been what she is to-day. Europe is what Christianity made it. All that is good and noble in England has Christianity at its root. Take your early public instructions. The University and other seats of learning were founded from religious motives. Whatever might be said of their present management and objects, an enquiry into their origin reveals Christ. We Indians have seen the influence of Christ in everything connected with the English nation. Christianity has moulded character of the English nation. It is impossible for an Indian to contemplate England without Christ as its architect. But the Englishman in his life, in his teachings, in his relations with the Indians repudiates any connection

with Christianity. the Lecturer in the Government College wishes his pupils to study English, History, English Literature, English politics as having no connection with Christ. The civilian in his work of administration disavows all connection with Christianity as if he happens to be a Christian in faith, but in the discharge of his official duties, he feigns the life of a non-Christian and he has not the courage of an avowal of his Christian principles. I do not wish that he should enforce his Christian principles on Hindus and Muhammedans, he need not force his Christian principles down the throats of his non-Christian sub-ordinates and subjects, but he certainly can give expression to his sense of disapproval of that which is revolting to Christian principles. Very often his conduct is censurable judged by universal principles of morality in a position of authority, place beyond the power of correction by those whom his conduct affects. The people consider his censurable life as the result of growth amidst Christian environments. People think and say this is the result of Christian education in a Christian Country.

Missionaries out in India do not consider it any part of their duty to exercise their influence over the lives of officials. The two communities live apart as far from one another as do the natives apart from Europeans. Both are engaged in raising India to the rank of a civilised country. The work of one is as important as the other. It is impossible for any country unless it believes in and practices the cardinal principles of Christianity. The recent achievements of Japan in the sphere of warfare have sometimes been cited to prove that it is possible for a non-Christian nation to be great. But who argue this, forget that the principles of Christianity are dear to every Japanese. The Japanese, are Buddists and Buddha is an eminent illustration of life of self-denial and humility. To profess Christianity as one's faith is not to appreciate the principles of Christianity. A man might not be baptized and he might have a keen sense of appreciation of the Christian principles ; on the other hand, a man might be baptized a Christian and yet might believe in principles which are not deducible from the life of Christ. The two cardinal virtues which stand out prominently in the life of Christ are humility and readiness to forgive, Christ washing the feet of his disciples and praying for the forgiveness for those who crucified him are the two events which appeal most to the Eastern mind. Self-denial enters into both of these as an important factor.

The Indian has been accustomed to believe in a thousand incarnations of the Deity. There are so many avatars ; Ram, Krishna, Chaitanya are all incarnations. An incarnation is an act of condescension on the part of the Divine Being. God is worshipped and feared when he is in heaven but He is loved when He comes down to meet man on earth. It is love mingled with reverence, but devoid of the feeling of fear. Comparing man or rather referring to human nature for the sake of illustration Her Gracious Majesty, the late Queen Victoria is loved most when we hear of visits to the cottage of some poor woman or of her kindness of a personal character to some poor man or woman.

With love and good wishes,

Your Loving father.

APPENDIX II

Address

by

Srimati Shoila Bala Das

On the occasion of

The opening of

Shoila Bala Women's Coillege

ON THE 28th APRIL 1952

at

MADHU SMRITI

The residence of

Late Sri Madhu Sudan Das, C.I.E.

Hon'ble chief minister and friends ;

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Madhu Smriti which was my late father's residence. Here on this ground more than a hundred meetings, At Homes, Evening and Garden Parties were held in the past, to bring the problems of Orissa to the notice of the then Government and high officials and other distinguished persons visiting Cuttack. For fifty years it was a one man's show and that one man never grudged to give his time, his labour, and to spend his money like water for the uplift of the people of Orissa and for the amalgamation of the States. Here on this ground the birth of the first National Life of Orissa took place. The development of various industries also started here. The Prajabandhu Sabha was started. The weaving of Khaddar was introduced in this place, and here the then Lieutenant governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sir John Woodburn, had addresses from my father's 200 workmen and shook hands with each of them. This ground was the scene of various activities, all for the uplift of Orissa. So this place is sacred to the memory of my father, and here I welcome you all this evening.

I shall now tell you about three things :

(1) My connection with Madhu Sudan Das

(2) History of this House

(3) The reason of my gift of Madhu Smriti to the women of Orissa.

(1) My connection with Madhu Sudan Das :

My own father and Madhu Sudan were fellow students in the London Mission College, Calcutta. They were both Hindus and occupied the same room in the Hostel. They both embraced Christianity the same day in the same Church, and by the same Clergyman. Both of them lost their ancestral property. They were great friends and their friendship was based on religion. It therefore lasted throughout their lives, and I am the product of that friendship. Madhu Sudan married a Bengali lady. My father brought his Hindu wife to his house from her village home where I was born and I was loved even then buy Madhu Sudan and his wife who wanted to adopt me then. But my parents would not agree to it. I came to Madhu Sudan's house at Cuttack with my parents in 1890. Again Madhu Sudan asked my parents to give me to him to adopt. I do not know why he preferred me to my other brothers and sister or girls of his own Province. Perhaps because I was a chatterbox and boldly expressed my opinions even at that early age and therefore he took a fancy to me, thinking he would mould me according to his ideas. After my mother's death we brothers and sisters came to live with him permanently. He educated me, sent me to England, gave me his name, so that I may be known to everybody as his daughter. Since then I have been known here and abroad and was presented at Their Majesties' Court in London in 1907 as the daughter of Madhu Sudan Das, and was the first Indian lady to be presented in a 'sari' for which the Court regulations had to be changed for me.

After my return my father wanted me to take up the education of the girls of the Province. The first Girls' High School was started by me, in 1908, which is the present Ravenshaw Girls' School, It was made over to Government in a flourishing condition in 1913 and it was remarked by the then D.P.I. of the Government that "it represents the first really successful effort in the way of Oriya female education." In 1914, through my effort at the Female Education Conference convened by the Government at Ranchi, the first State Scholarship was created by Government and after her return she became the Lady Principal of my school. The Training School for Hindu widows was started by me at

Government expense, and through my effort I.A. classes were attached to the Girls' High School, which is the nucleus of the present Women's College. The dream which I had in 1908 that the girls of the Province will have College education and have the same facilities as in other Provinces has been fulfilled. My father was greatly pleased with all my activities towards the education of girls of this Province. During my stay of twelve years in Patna, which was then the Capital of Orissa I was actively engaged in various educational activities. I feel great satisfaction and pride that all my work has been crowned with success. Through the blessing of my father, though I am not his natural daughter, yet I was more than a daughter to Madhu Sudan Das. Living in the house as his daughter for the last 55 years, I did more work for the country he loved than any natural daughter could have done and he wrote to me once that the greatest love. I could show him was to dedicate my life for the service of his country. I did it and this made him happy at his death-bed and he blessed me. It was the great ambition of his life that his daughter would devote her life for the service of the women of his Province. And whether I have been able to discharge this sacred mission of his life will be judged by posterity.

(2) ***History of the House :***

In 1890 when I came here for the first time I saw this house being built. In 1892 Madhu Sudan came to live in this house and in 1896 it became my home. We two sisters and brothers learnt many lessons from that great man. His life was a daily lesson to us. My real education which has equipped me for various activities took place in this house, - at the dining table, in his drawing room, in his office room, and even in his bedroom where he rested before retiring for the night. Whenever he talked to us he would always give his advice. Thus we learned the great lesson of self-sacrifice and service for the country from this great man.

He started various industries in this house and his industrial concerns made him a beggar. Though he earned like a Prince, he spent like a Prince. His only aim was to develop the industries of his country so that the workmen would earn more. But a man with a limited income cannot go on as he went on. There must be a crash. He incurred debts. This house was mortgaged to the Maharaja of Parlakimedi. At the latter part of his life he was greatly involved and in trouble. His Cuttack Tannery,

which was valued by Government of Bengal at five lakhs of rupees, fetched only Rs. 50,000 in the auction sale and that ruined him completely. I requested some of our Oriya friends to buy Madhu Smriti House which was going for a mere song. But nobody came forward to buy this house and allow Madhu Sudan to live in this house even though we offered to pay rent. So we two sisters and my late brother C.K. Hazra by the sale of our ancestral house in Calcutta and by my brother's earning bought this house at the Court sale for Rs. 20,000/-. A few years after Madhu Sudan's death some people sent a resolution to government that this house should be taken from me to make a memorial for Madhu Sudan who was a lion among men. It surprised and amused me that when the lion was made to leave his den, no one came forward to give shelter to the lion. Had it not been for his Bengali daughter and her relations, the lion would have been shelterless. More than three times I asked Government to take over this house to start industrial and educational work in memory of Madhu Sudan, but it could not be done for want of funds.

Gift Madhu Smriti to the Women of Orissa :

Last year my house was going to be acquired by Government but I was determined that without my consent none should be able to take possession of my house. Government dropped the project. I then offered my house to the Chief Minister, the Hon'ble Sri Naba Krishna Chaudhuri, as a gift to Government. The Chief Minister gladly accepted my offer and proposed that the Women's College, which was without a house, may be housed in Madhu Smriti. I welcomed the proposal, as no scheme could have been better than to have a Women's College in the house where I was educated and equipped for the work and service of the country. I asked the Chief Minister, who is present here and can verify my statement to call this Women's College the "Madhu Sudan Women's College." But he told me government in recognition of all my past services in the cause of women's education have already given it my name and this cannot be changed. He also said this was the most fitting place where there will be Shailabala Women's College and it will be associated with Madhu Sudan's name and the front pillars at the gate will always bear Madhu Sudan's name for posterity to know that this is Madhu Sudan's house. It was one of the great missions of Madhu Sudan's life that women

should be educated, for without well educated mothers a country can never go ahead. It gives me great pleasure that this Bengali daughter who bears his name, and as his daughter saved this house to preserve the memory of the great man in Orissa and has made a gift of her house in his memory for whom nothing was done by his own country men. My late sister Sudhansu Bala, who bought his valuable law Library at the auction sale, preserved the memory of this great lawyer of Orissa by making a free gift of that Library to the first High Court in Orissa, where a Madhu Sudan Library has been established and the portraits of the donor and Madhu Sudan were hung up by the then chief Justice, Sri B.K. Ray, and I am thankful to him for preserving my father's memory at the High Court. I also thank him for helping me to preserve the memory of my father in this house.

I also thank the Chief Minister, Sri Nabakrishna Chaudhuri for helping me to preserve the memory in the house of this great leader of Orissa, who was the maker of New Orissa and the father of Oriya Nationalism. After his death a great many meetings were held and many proposals were made to have a suitable memorial for Madhu Sudan, but in the last eighteen years since his death nothing substantial has been done by the people of Orissa. I take this opportunity to thank our popular Chief Minister for helping me to make a gift of this historic house to the women of Orissa. It was he who would not allow Government to acquire this house and it was through him that the acquirement notification was withdrawn. It was he whose appreciation and help made it possible for me to finalise the scheme so quickly. His Chief Secretary, Sri B. Mukherji, also took great trouble and interest in the project and brought it to a successful finish and I thank him for it. Government machinery moves very slowly, but through his efforts it moved like an express train. Both he and the Chief Minister have spared no trouble and money to make me comfortable in my quarters in this house where I shall live till my death.

I must not leave out the Secretary of the Education Department, Sri R. Sarangi. He had to draft and redraft this deed-of-gift many a time, until I accepted it. I thank him and the Director of Public Instruction and the Lady Principal for the College. All of them took great interest in the project and helped me in every way.

I think I shall not be doing justice if I fail to appreciate and give thanks for the work done by the P.W.D. Everyone of that Department, including the Executive Officer, Engineers, Overseers and staff did their utmost to have the building completed in so short a time. The P.W.D. gets a bad name everywhere, but in this case they did the work very well and satisfied even me, who am not easy to be satisfied. Last but not least comes the Contractor who did his share and carried out all my instructions even to his loss at times, remarking that when I could have made such a gift to the nation, he did not mind giving his little.

I think the spirit of Madhu Sudan was on them all and made them do their best.

A Museum consisting of two rooms where Madhu Sudan lived and died and containing some of the things used by him and also some articles made in his workshop are included in the gift of Madhu-Smriti. It is to be maintained by the College and will be under the supervision of the lady Principal after the death of the donor.

A Madhu-Smriti gift Committee has been formed and I thank the members for agreeing to serve on it. I am sure they will do their duty in maintaining the terms of the gift.

In conclusion I would request the government to fulfil the requirements of a First Grade College for women. This being a residential house naturally many things are lacking, e.g., an Assembly hall, Library and Hostel and more classrooms. These should be provided to make the College worthy of the name of the great man in whose house it is located.

I hope the girls who are to be educated here and who are to be the mothers of the future generation will always bear in mind that the house belongs to the man who gave his life in the service of Orissa, and they would also dedicate their lives to the service of their Motherland.

APPENDIX-III

Speeches on State Duty at Delhi

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : (ORISSA) Mr. Chairman, Sir, the unique character of the Bill inspires me to speak a few words. Before I begin, I wish to congratulate our Finance Minister on having piloted this Bill so ably in the House of the People and on having brought this Bill to this House. Though this Bill has taken a long time to travel to this House, yet I feel that it is better late than never and the Hon'ble Finance Minister has earned our thanks. Those who know our Finance Minister, I am sure, will agree with me and will appreciate the truth of my saying that he is most zealous of his exchequer. He is never satisfied unless he finds that his exchequer is full. Therefore his calculative brain finds out new sources, if I may say so, a new avenue to collect revenue for his exchequer. Look at the taxes that we have to pay him, Income-Tax, Super-Tax, Sales-Tax, Excise-Tax and various other taxes too numerous to enumerate. Not only that, we have also to satisfy him by paying taxes on our daily food. But one thing is in his favour, Sir, and that is that he is most generous in exempting the Members of Parliament from assessing any tax on the speeches which we make on the floor of this House, and for this act of generosity we are very thankful and grateful to him, but, Sir, he is never satisfied ! He wants his exchequer to be full. Therefore only the other day he has taken a loan of Rs.75 crores but it has not satisfied him and he wants now an Estate Duty. During our life-time we try to satisfy him by paying all sorts of taxes and now, when we die, he does not like that we should escape him.

AN HON. MEMBER : You must try not to die.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : He does not wish that we should escape him and therefore out of our life's hard earnings that we accumulate, he wants a share from our successors after our death. This imposition, Sir, I call as Death Duty. Whether living or dying we must satisfy our Finance Minister.

SHRI M.C. SHAH : And get certificate for Heaven.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : But, Sir, we should not grudge to pay him his taxes, as we know this is for the welfare of the State and for this reason, I whole-heartedly support this Bill.

Now, Sir, he says that the principal object of the bill is two-fold, one of which is to find funds for the development of the country. I don't know how far this objective will be reached. It will be seen by the progress made hereafter. The second objective is, as he says, that he wants to bring down the rich people to the level of the middle-classes. Here also I find, perhaps he will be a little disappointed. But he has not mentioned the third objective which I find is – if I am not mistaken – to do away with the joint family system.

Now Sir, though this Bill has taken a long time to come to this House, yet there were people such as landlords, Ex-Rulers, business magnates, and rich people who knew that the Bill was coming and I presume, Sir, that they have taken good care to remove their valuable movable properties in the shape of hard cash, gold, jewellery and other valuables to foreign countries, and our Finance Minister will not be able to tax them because they are beyond his reach and other people possibly have taken their valuable properties underground and even the expertise of government surveyor will not be able to lay its hands on such properties and our Finance Minister may be disappointed in not getting the maximum from the rich except on the immovable property. As regards the leveling of the various classes of people, you all know that the rich will never come down to the level of the middle-class people. They know and they are quite expert at dodging and evading the law. Therefore our Finance Minister will not be able to do much with them but the real hardship will be felt by the middle class people and by the members of the joint families.

Sir, I have not gone through this Bill as I should have done, because this Bill I got only yesterday and therefore I will not go into its intricate points. I will only make certain general observations. For the purpose of the administration of this Act we find there are authorities and the Finance Minister mentioned that they were the controller of the Estate Duty and a Board. Now I would like to say a few words about this authority. You all know that when a person dies, if he leaves some valuable property and when the Estate Duty is imposed by the Controller of Estate Duty, there may be hardship felt by the successor. He may not be satisfied with the assessment made by the Controller. He would like to have a rebate. Therefore I find that in the Bill there is provision saying that appeals can be made to the Board. But, Sir, you all know that the Board

and the Controller of Estate Duty from the two links of the same machinery and as such, the necessary relief may be found very difficult to obtain at the hands of the Board. Then there is another thing, that when a person is thus affected, he can move the High Court or the Supreme Court. But it is well known that such courts will not or may not entertain questions involving only facts. They generally deal only with questions of law and therefore here also the necessary relief may not be found by the successor. So what is he to do ? He must have confidence in the authority and at the same time he must have justice. Therefore, may I suggest that the formation of an independent body like the Tribunal of the Income-Tax Department which can really function without let or hindrance and they will not be influenced by any outside interest. Therefore is such a body if formed, I am sure, people will think that they are going to have justice. It is not sufficient that justice has been done but, Sir, it is essential that the person who has to pay the taxes must be made to feel that justice has been done and this can only be provided by an independent body like the Tribunal.

Now, I wish to say a few words about the valuers. I find the valuer will be an independent person. So far so good. The valuers will be needed for the purpose of valuing the immovable property only. Without valuing the immovable property, the Estate duty cannot be levied. May I make a suggestion here that instead of a valuer, if you take the market value of such immovable property situated within a Municipality or Corporation or Local Board and fix at 10 times or 15 times or even 20 times the latest value of such property as fixed by the Municipality, Corporation or Local Board, there will be no necessity to have a valuer, and besides if you have a valuer his opinions will always be subject to dispute in the law courts.

Therefore, I submit that if this measure is adopted then much unnecessary litigation, waste of time and money on both sides and nepotism, corruption and bribery could be eliminated.

It further strikes me that if a valuer values the property at a certain value and if the person who is responsible for paying the duty fails to pay it, then it becomes necessary that the property should be sold. But as you know, Sir, when a property is sold you can never get the value put upon it by the valuer, by selling the property. Here, I may give you a concrete

instance in which I was personally interested. A property worth Rs. 5 to 6 lakhs had to be auctioned. It became necessary that property should be sold in order to pay the dues. This property was valued at about Rs. 5 lakhs by the Government. But when it was auctioned you would be surprised to hear that it fetched only Rs. 50,000/-. Why ? Simply because there was no person to bid more, there was no money to buy this property. Therefore you must remember this common feature that the value of a property rises and falls according to the circumstances prevailing at the time and the circumstances of the seller and the buyer. And in this case, when the property has to be sold for realising the Estate duty, naturally the value of the property will go down. The owner will never get the price fixed by the valuer. Therefore, it is better that when Government wants the Estate duty to be realised on the property, the Government themselves should buy the property and pay the estate duty which they charge on it and pay the balance to the owner of the property.

Next I would like to say one or two words about gifts. Clauses 8, 9 and 10 of the Bill deal with gifts and there are two kinds of gifts for which time-limit has been prescribed. I would like to say that on gifts for charity, there should be no time limit and no estate duty should be levied on such gifts.

SHRI RAJAGOPAL NAIDU (MADRAS) : Yes, if they are *bonafide gifts.*

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : We all know, Sir, in our country many people on their death-bed give away large sums of money as gifts, for the improvement of the village, for creating endowments, for the establishment of colleges and schools, hospitals, *Dharmasalas* and so on and if an estate duty is extracted on the charity of his predecessor, it will create hardship for the successor. Government realises that it is its primary duty to establish colleges, schools, hospitals and other such institutions. So when a private individual makes a gift for the above-mentioned charitable purposes, the Government should welcome the move in that direction and should not levy any tax on such a charity, simply because the man died before six months were over. Therefore, I again leave it for the consideration of the Hon. Finance Minister whether it is desirable that he should levy any tax on a charity of this nature and I also suggest that there should be no time-limit for them.

In the case of relatives, I find that if any person dies before 2 years, then he need not pay any estate duty. But as we all know, men are very fond of their money and, therefore, during their life-time they do not wish to part with the money. They want to give a large share of it to their relatives and they do it in their will. But they do not know when they will die and so they do not do it early enough. Therefore I put it to the Hon. Minister that the time limit should be curtailed and instead of 2 years, the period should be fixed as one year. I do not know whether he is going to accept my proposal, but all the same, I would like to say what I feel about it.

Then I find that residential houses are included for the determination of estate duty and this, I feel, is not fair. I feel that the residential houses should be absolutely excluded for the purpose of computation of the estate duty.

KHWAJA INAIT ULLAH (BIHAR) : Up to Rs. 1 lakh it is excluded.

The deputy minister for finance (*Sir M.C. Shah*) : The exemption limit is Rs. 1 lakh, including residential houses.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : You know that many middle-class people build their houses for the purpose of living in and when they die – I refer to middle-class people – they hardly leave any cash or anything for the successors; and many people find it difficult to live in the big house and they generally let it out, certain rooms at least, to pay the Municipal taxes and also in order to maintain the family. The Hon. Finance Minister wants to extract the estate duty on residential houses above the valuation of Rs. 1 lakh, because he has given the exemption limit as Rs. 1 lakh, not for residential houses, but for all. Therefore, if the value of the house is above Rs. 1 lakh and the person has no money to pay the duty then what will happen ? The house must be sold or be mortgaged to pay the estate duty. But what will happen to the family ? They will be rendered homeless and be stranded on the road. Is it the intention of the Hon. Finance Minister that these middle-class families should thus be stranded on the road ? I am sure this is not his intention. Therefore, I am putting it before him and I am suggesting that residential houses should be exempted from this tax. But at the same time, Sir, I feel it will not be fair for him and for me to ask him to exclude all residential houses, because residential houses are of different values. So I would like to propose that residential houses

up to the value of Rs. 1 lakh should be exempted so that people who have got no money but their residential houses can let out some of the rooms and at the same time live in the house.

There are also, I find, certain minor exemptions given. I was especially pleased to find that the Finance Minister has fixed an exemption limit of Rs. 50,000 for joint Hindu families and for others he has raised it to Rs. 1 lakh.

This is a great change that I see. Then, there are certain exemptions and I do not like to talk about all excepting about the burial. Christians, as you know, bury their dead, and for that purpose, Sir, a plot of land is required where the body can be interred. In towns, the price of land has gone up very high and to get a plot of land you have to pay very high prices. The place where you bury your dead must be a pucca grave and that also costs money. After a year, you may want to have it properly made by putting marble slabs all round or putting mosaic work and a cupola or some small monument. All these cost much. Therefore, I leave it for the consideration of the Finance Minister as to whether he could possibly increase the burial expenditure at least by a thousand rupees more.

Then, Sir, in clause 55, I find that all persons having property shall deliver an account to the Controller of all his movable and immovable properties in respect of which Estate Duty is payable within six months. Sir, I think, this requires a little change because many illiterate persons who are required to pay the Duty will be unnecessarily harassed and penalised by the Controller and there will be no end of explanation in law courts simply because of the ignorance of the people about the rules of the Estate Duty. Therefore, Sir, instead of the people being asked to give an account , let the duty be cast on the Controller to issue notice to such persons who have property and who are liable to pay Estate Duty, the information about which, Sir, should be provided to the Controller by the Officer of the Thana or by the village officers. In these offices, there is a register and not only that, Sir, these officers in the villages know all about the people who are under their jurisdiction. Therefore, Sir, it is much better to cast the entire duty on the Controller.

I find that the time given for filling the return is six months. Sir, I would like to be curtailed, let it be only sixty days. If you give a long

period, Sir, then many of the movable property may go underground. Therefore, it is better that the time is curtailed to sixty days.

I have only one to two words more. I find that the penalty clause is very light. If the Finance Minister wishes to have the full revenue extracted from the rich people, then Sir, I would ask him to make the penalty clause heavy and more effective. What is a thousand rupees as double duty to the rich people ? it is a mere drop in the ocean. If the penalty clause is such that if any person makes a false declaration or gives false accounts he would forfeit half of his property, you will find, Sir, that there would be no such false accounts. Here, I would quote a case, Sir. In Orissa, there was a Ruling Chief. He was most conservative and orthodox ; he would have nothing of British ways in his State but he was a hard taskmaster and it was a rule of his State that any person plucking a green mango or ripe mango from a tree, would be jailed not only for that mango season but for another mango season and he must undergo rigorous imprisonment. You may say that it is a very hard punishment but look at the effect it had. A friend of the Raja asked him why he was so hard on his tenants. The answer was, "Look here, I have got 10 to 15 thousand mango trees in my State. They do not bring any revenue to my State and if I have to keep watchers to watch these mango trees it would cost me much. You know the mango is the most delicious and nutritious fruit and helps the tenants to keep their bodies quite fit. But if these are plucked when they are quite green, "then my tenants," he said, "are prevented from getting nourishing food. Therefore, I made this rule. I have told my tenants that they can take away all mangoes which are falling from the trees. You would be surprised that even a merchant from the towns used to come, collect the mangoes falling and then sell them in the market and he was not charged any duty." But, the Ruling Chief was very strong on this point that if any one plucks a green mango, he would be jailed. The Chief told his friend "Do you know how many I have jailed within the last ten years ? Only two persons because the punishment is so severe it naturally prevents people from doing the same thing again." Therefore, Sir, I say that if our Finance Minister wants to collect the revenue he should be very strict ; he should increase the punishment by putting it in the Bill that if any person makes a false declaration or false affidavit he will forfeit half of his property ; if

he does that, he would find. Sir, there would be a check. If you don't and If you do as it is in the Bill, it may be just like black marketing and you will have another set of people enriching themselves.

There is one more thing, Sir, which strikes me. It strikes me, in the nature of things, that when a return is to be given, you will find much valuable property will not be accounted for and, to that extent, therefore, the Government would lose its revenue. May I ask the Finance Minister whether he would not make a law that all persons having assets over a sum of Rs.75,000 or one lakh of rupees should file a statement during his life time and any appreciation or depreciation, addition or subtraction from this property should be made known to the Controller from year to year, so that the Controller may find it easy to get the revenue collected ?

I will not take much of your time. You have been very patient and you have given me a patient hearing. I leave all the intricate points for my colleagues, who are, I am sure, very capable and they will be able to deal with them more ably than I could do.

SHRI C.G.K. REDDY (MYSORE) No, No.

KUMARI SHOILA BALA DAS : But, Sir, before I sit down, I wish to say once again that I support this Bill whole-heartedly and I wish that our Hon. Finance Minister will be able to have a free passage for this Bill in this House.

With these words, Sir, I sit down and thank you for the opportunity given.

APPENDIX-IV

Speeches on Discussion of Budget at the Council of State

Kumari Shoila Bala Das (Orissa) :

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir,

I congratulate the Finance Minsiter for the way in which he has prepared this Budget. This Budget has been framed in such a way that it has been accepted with mingled feelings. On our side Members have accepted this Budget and thanked the Finance Minister and congratulated him for having conferred benefit to the country by presenting this Budget and on the other side the Opposition has criticised the Budget, as it is the duty of the Opposition to criticise everything which comes from this side. I would like to tell you in this House, Sir, that during the last two years of my experience here, I have learnt much from the Opposition., My eyes have been opened to many things which I did not know before. I found that the opposition many a time placed constitructive suggestions and I think that if my government had accepted some of these suggestions, the position of the Government would have been very different from what it is today. My colleagues of this side said that in this budget the Finance Minister has very carefully and thoughtfully considered the common man, i.e. the villager, as they are not required to pay any duty on soap and cloth. But they forget that the common man is found not only in the villages but also in the streets, in the gullies and in the busties of every town and city. What about these common men ? Are they not entitled to pay any duty on soap and cloth ?

Sir, I do not wish to say anything about the merits and demerits of the Budget simply because I am ashamed to tell you that I have not studied the Budget at all owing to my defective vision, but from what little I have seen of this Budget or what little I have heard of it here from this side and the other side, I feel that it would have been better if the Finance Minister had not taxed the common man's soap and cloth. He could easily have taxed the rich people. There are duties on luxury goods. He could have increased those duties. What about cigarettes and tobacco, luxury cars, perfumes of all kinds, powders, lipsticks, etc. ? Also the cutlery and crockery which the rich people purchase for their comfort. If these goods had been taxed even 100 percent, I am sure the rich people

would have paid it, because they have purchasing power, whereas the common man cannot pay even two piece more than what he is paying today. The common man cannot get even two square meals a day, though our Food and Agriculture Minister said the other day that there is self-sufficiency in food. I would like to ask "Where is this self-sufficiency, when the common man cannot get even two meals a day ?" You know that the market price of rice has gone up. Perhaps our Food and Agriculture Minister does not know that it has gone up from six annas to ten annas per seer. I would say that there is self-sufficiency in food only when I find that common man cannot get rice at three or four seers per rupee, not before that.

Sir, my province is a rice-growing province. I would like to know what has happened to the good rice that we have had all along ? The other day the Food Minister said that all the bad rice comes from Orissa. In my state we have got very good rice too. I would like to say to the Food Minister that he collects and puts all the bad rice in the ration shops to be given to the people and sends all the good rice to the black market so that they could get more profit. I must say it that if he had efficient men in his department all the good rice would not have found shelter in the black market.

Much has been said about the Five Year Plan. I am sorry to say that I have not seen the work of the Five Year Plan because I have not visited the Community Project but I do believe that the Five Year Plan has done some good even though not to the extent that money has been spent upon it. There is the unemployment problem and I do believe that the Five Year Plan has, to a certain extent, solved this problem but not altogether. The question is getting acuter and acuter every day, and what is my Government going to do about it ? Unless you tackle this problem, the young men who are unemployed will be in the Communist Party. Will that be good for Government ? Government should try and find out some means to give employment to our unemployed men.

I rejoice to find that the Five Year Plan has given birth to a baby girl, called the Women's Social Welfare Board, and the guardian of this baby girl, I am proud to say, is again a woman, and the Government trusts this woman. She is in charge of this baby girl and Rs. 4 crores have been placed in charge of this guardian to be distributed among

women's voluntary associations in the country for expansion and development and also to start new women's associations where it is required. But I am afraid that this baby girl will not be able to spend this money discreetly because I will give some examples from which you will find that the money which has been given to this Social Welfare Board is not properly spent. This Social Welfare Board gets applications from throughout the country and according to its discretion, it distributes money to various women's agencies. It has got some Advisory Body to work for it. It has called Advisory Panels of Women. It has got three such panels, the Children's Panel, the Women's Panel, and the Delinquent Children's Panel. Now I want to say something about the Panel for children and you will see how money is being wasted by this Panel. This baby girl is not yet grown up to take charge of so much money. I have got a programme here which has been sent to me in my state about the prospective visit of the Panel for Children and this is a Five Day Programme. You will be surprised to see how these Panels travel. They travel by plane in a right-lordly fashion or in air-conditioned first class carriages. They are received by the State Government and taken to the Government House as guests or they are taken to the State Circuit House where they are provided with all creature comforts, and yet they get. T.A. and D.A. from the Social Welfare Board. Now, this Panel is supposed to see the Children's Associations and the work which is being carried on in the State about children, but instead of that this programme has been made by the State Government in consultation with the Deputy Health Minister. Now in this programme you will find a four hours' visit is given to the Government medical institution. Can you tell me what this Children's Panel has got to do with the Government medical institution ? It is women's voluntary work they are going to see. Instead of that in this programme we find four hours are to be given to the Government Medical Institution. So four hours have been wasted. Then I find that on the same day they have got three hours to go and see the poor cottage industry. Then they are going to be entertained for two and half hours. So three hours are given for this purpose. I would like to know what these women have got to do with the inspection of the Cottage Industries. That is a department for another women's Board. But here I find this Panel cannot understand what their business is. They only go to places for their own pleasure. Again I find two hours are given in the two days for press

representatives. What are they going to do with the press ? What things are they going to say to the press ? They themselves do not know for what purpose they have come to my State and yet here I find two hours are given to the press representatives. Then the funniest thing is, on the next day they want to spend seven hours to go to a State which was a Ruler's State before and now it is merged. It is 80 miles from Cuttack and they want to go in a motor car, take rest and have lunch with the Deputy Health Minister, see only the government medical hospital and the place where the Deputy Health Minister has started a small Children's Welfare Work. Is it worth while to go to 80 miles and see only this work, whereas there are half-a-dozen children's Associations in my State which can easily be seen and the problem could be solved. The most regrettable part is though this is the children's Panel, they never thought that it is their duty to see hundreds of laper children in Cuttack. My State government does not do much for these Lepers' Children and it is only the missionaries who are connected with it and the Government only give some grants to them and they think that their duty has been done, though it is the duty of the Health Department to see that we do not all become lepers because all these children who have leper parents may be infected in a very short time if they are not segregated and it is very essential that these leper children should have a hostel which should be segregated from their parents but instead of solving this problem, this Childrens' Panel who go to my State, only go for pleasure and for their own enjoyment. Another thing is I had a letter from the Secretary of the Social Welfare Board that to-day the Women's Panel is coming to my state to see my institution Maternity and Child-Welfare Centre. They will arrive to-day from the south and they will leave that place tonight. Can you imagine what they can see in a few hours time in Puri and other places where there are many women's Associations and they require grants and they want that this Women's Panel should go and visit them. Instead of that they just come to the town, enjoy life, attend parties, have dinner in Government House and they get T.A. and D.A. and they go back to their own places. This is the work that your Welfare Board is doing.

Again I should like to tell you that it is much better that instead of wasting the money on this panel, you should abolish this Panel. The

Chairman of the Social Welfare Board should advertise in a paper. She can get a number of applications and the applications should be sent in duplicate forms. one to the Board and the other to respective State Governments should be asked to forward this application with their recommendation and remarks to the Social Welfare Board so that there will be no bogus association and you can do away with Panel altogether. Now about this Women's Panel which has already come to my State today, I should like to say this that they left the place on the 5th February, they had one month's trip. They went to Madras, Madura, Trichinopoly, Bangalore, Travancore-Cochin and all these places of archeological interest and then at last they have taken a trip to Ceylon. So I hear I do not know whether the Social Welfare Board is going to pay for their trip to Ceylon even but I know this much that they will be the State guests of the Ceylon Government. Now on their way back they cannot afford much time for Orissa. They are now coming for a few hours just to say that they have visited. Orissa Women's Association and on their report will depend our grant. I think this baby girl should be looked after carefully by the guardian who is an experienced guardian. Otherwise the money which has been given in charge of this baby girl will be wasted. The Women's Associations or the Children's Associations would not be benefited.

Now I should like to say a few words about rehabilitation. The Government is spending much money for rehabilitation. Whether the Government is justified or not I am not going to say anything but it is enough that the government has spent money. A couple of years ago a few thousand displaced persons from East Bengal came to Orissa. Whether it was the fault of my Government or through the fault of these displaced persons, I do not know, but they ran away from Orissa. Now again a fresh batch has come. I have not seen this batch yet nor have I gone to their camp. But friends who have come and told me that these displaced persons have got real and imaginary grievances. One thing I found out is that these displaced persons think that it is not through their own fault they have left their homes and come here. They think that it is the duty of our Government to feed them, to maintain them, to look after them and if the Government fail to do it, naturally they feel disappointed. I tried to help some of their women by taking them in my institution to

give them training in midwifery course. But I find though we had to give them Rs. 17/8/- a month they do not like to do any work. They only came to get the allowances. Again in our Women's Association we tried to get hold of these women and teach them sewing, knitting etc., in order to see that they will be able to earn some money. But I found that they were very lazy. These women from East Bengal, they do not wish to do any work they do not like to earn money by doing honest work, but they want that the Government should support them. Sir, in this connection I would like to get my answer from the Rehabilitation Minister to whom I put some questions in August last.

An Honorable Minister :– But he is not here.

Kumari Shoila Bala Das :– He is not here, it is true, but this is the Budget discussion and the Deputy Minister for Finance who is here will, I am sure, make it a point to tell the Rehabilitation Minister about this. Sir, In August last I sent a few questions for information and I got this reply, that "the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House in due course." Sir, six months have elapsed and yet "this due course" has not yet come. I do not know what government means by "due course." Is it one year ? Is it two years ? Or is it even half a dozen years ? But this information has not yet come and I should like to add this that by nature these questions are quite simple ones. And our government can give the answer to these questions unless there is something wrong somewhere and the Government feels uncomfortable to give the information. Here is a small question Sir, that I asked. What is the total number of the movable and immovable evacuees' properties in Orissa which have already been vested in the Custodian ? the second question was : "What is the total amount of the property and estimated monthly income from all the various evacuees' properties which have been vested in the Custodian ?" And then "Whether all income from these evacuees" properties is collected regularly. If not why not. whether any large amount of arrears in respect of these evacuees' properties has accumulated and will the government lay a statement on the table showing how from month to month. these arrears have accumulated. Sir, do you think these questions are wrong ? What is there in them that my government cannot answer these questions ? And not only that, the Rehabilitation Minister also does not insist on the State government to

give the answer. The Custodian is generally appointed with the consent or with the approval of the Central Rehabilitation Minister and it is the duty of the Rehabilitation Minister when questions of this nature are sent to find out the information or to insist for the information from the State Government. You may think that I am in the wrong, but it seems to me that there is something wrong somewhere, or my Government feels uncomfortable to give the answer to these questions. What is there in these questions ? I will say it is the fault of my Central Rehabilitation Minister not to insist for the information and by doing this by not getting this information, he is winking at corruption and this should be stopped. And if the Central Ministers do not act strongly and promptly, Sir, you will never be able to root out corruption which you know is growing daily.

Now I would like to say something about the Income-tax department and the Customs. I am not going to say anything in a spirit of criticism, but my object is to draw the attention of the respective Deputy Ministers to this and to see that the name of the Congress Government is not tainted. As you know, that the name is already badly tainted and the Congress is losing ground. I say this corruption must be stopped. I know it is very difficult to put a stop to the corruption. But if my Honorable Ministers are strict, and they are honest no doubt about it as I believe they are honest, and if they are strong too, they will be able to a certain extent to put a stop to corruption.

Sir, you know the Income-tax and Customs are Central Revenues and these two departments give revenue to the Central exchequer. If these two departments are corrupt, then the Government losses the revenue. I approached my Honorable Deputy Finance Minister sometime ago and brought some cases before him. And I may tell you that he is always prompt in taking action. As soon as I approached him he took action. But what can he do, Sir, though he is a mighty person, no doubt about it, and he occupies a high position in the Government, but what can he do ? He has to depend on the administrative machinery – and Sir, I regret to say that this Ministry is not always competent to do work fairly.

Then I would like to say another thing. In the Income-tax Department in my state, Sir, – I am always saying it from my personal experience, for you know I am constantly asking questions about income-tax, I found that in 1949 such big cases were pending even till 1952-53.

May I know why these cases, these big cases remain pending for a such long time ? Is it because the Income-tax Officer does not find it suitable to pass his order ? And do you know Sir, these big cases are always cases of businessmen, and you also know that in the lives of businessmen, there are ups and downs and they may sustain losses or they may leave the State and if they do that then you loose all the revenues. What precautions Sir, does the Income tax department take to see that they do not lose this revenue ? To-day the Honorable Deputy Finance Minister said that so many thousands of cases are still pending upto 31st March. What can you do ? He can pass orders to the Ministry. The Ministry will pass orders to the Board. The Board will pass orders to the Commissioner and the Commissioner to the Assistant Commissioner and then it will go to the Income-tax Officer. And these Income tax Officers, I have seen in many cases, have heard the cases, examined the books, scrutinised the accounts but they do not pass the order. Then in the meantime Sir, perhaps this particular officer is transferred and when he is transferred, the new officer comes and he wants to begin hearing again. Look at the harassment of your assessee and naturally on account of these harassments your Government is losing ground to-day. The Hon. Deputy Minister for Finance I know is very keen on putting down corruption. I do hope Sir that he will try to make the officers do their work a little more efficiently. I find fault with the Commissioner of Income Tax. You know, Sir, these Commissioners are mighty powerful officers. They can promote a person, send a man to the seventh heaven or they can mar the future of a junior officer. The promotion depends on the remarks of these Commissioners. Therefore, Sir, I would like to suggest for the consideration of the Deputy Finance Minister that he should send out instructions that the Assistant Commissioners when examining the departments should while sending the report, in duplicate, one copy to the Board and the other to the Commissioner so that there would not be any fear of this paper being tampered with in the office of the Commissioner.

Now, only one word about the Custom department, I do not wish to say much about this as I have already approached the Deputy Finance Minister customs who has promised to look into the matter. Still I would like to draw the attention of the Deputy Minister to the question of the preventive officers. You know Sir, that in the port of Calcutta, there are

innumerable Preventive officers. Their basic pay is about Rs. 88/-. I may be wrong and the Hon. Minister may correct me and with the dearness and other allowances they get a total of Rs. 165/- per month. But doing overtime work they may get upto Rs. 300/-. If you look at the . way they live in Calcutta, I do not think even the Deputy Finance Minister able to live in that a style. I would like to know how these Preventive Officers live in such a style ? Why do not the Superior officers to into this matter and see about them ? You all know, Sir, I have heard that 90% of these Preventive Officers in the Calcutta Port are corrupt. Sir, I do not know why the Finance Minister keeps these Preventive Officers as a fixture in one Port ? There are so many ports in India ? Why cannot they be transferred every two years so that they may not carry on even illegal business in their wives' names ?

With these few words I want to say once more, Sir that I am not saying anything in a spirit of criticism but my object is that this Government, which has got independence, should see that its name is not tainted by corruption. You must see that your officers do their work properly and efficiently and you must put a check to corruption. Thank you, Sir, for giving me patient hearing. I have finished now. Thank you.





ମଧୁସୂଦନଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁଶଯ୍ୟା ନିକଟରେ : – ବାମ ଦିଗରୁ – ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସରଳା ଦେବୀ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସୁଧାଂଶୁବାଳା ହାଜ୍‌ରା, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସ, ସ୍ୱାମୀ ବିଚିତ୍ରାନନ୍ଦ ଦାସ, ଶ୍ରୀ ହାଡ଼ିବନ୍ଧୁ ବେହେରା (ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଚାକର), ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ରପଦ ହାଜ୍‌ରା, ଶ୍ରୀ ପାରେଶ୍ୱର ମହାନ୍ତି, ଶ୍ରୀ ଗୁଣନିଧି ମହାନ୍ତି, ଦେବାନ୍ ବାହାଦୂର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଧର ମହାନ୍ତି, ବ୍ରଜ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦାସ, ଶ୍ରୀ ଚିନ୍ତାମଣି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନେ

ଶୈଳବାଳା ଦାସ (୧୮୭୫-୧୯୬୮) କେବଳ ଉତ୍କଳ ଗୌରବ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କ ପୋଷ୍ୟପୁତ୍ରୀ ଭାବରେ ସୁବିଦିତ ନୁହନ୍ତି, ସ୍ୱ ମହିମାରେ ବି ସୁବିଖ୍ୟାତ । ବିଗତ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଉଭୟ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତାର ପୂର୍ବବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଓ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନାରୀଶିକ୍ଷା, ସମାଜସଂସ୍କାର ଓ ରାଜନୈତିକ ଚେତନା ଜାଗରଣ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ଥାନ ଓ ଦାନ ଅବିସ୍ମରଣୀୟ । ନୂଆ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଜନକ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କ ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱର ସଠିକ ମୂଲ୍ୟାବଧାରଣା କରିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ତାଙ୍କରି ଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ପ୍ରତିପାଳିତ । ଏହି ମହିୟସୀ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ଓ କୃତିତ୍ୱ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଣିଧେୟ । ପ୍ରକୃତପକ୍ଷେ ଶୈଳବାଳା ମଧୁସୂଦନଙ୍କ ସେକ୍ରେଟାରୀ ନଥିଲେହେଁ ବସ୍ତୁତଃ ତାଙ୍କ ଜନହିତକର ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପ ସହିତ ସବୁମନ୍ତେ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ଥିଲେ, ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ପିତାଙ୍କ ମହତ୍ ଆଦର୍ଶାନୁଗାମୀ ହୋଇ ଦେଶ ଓ ଦଶର କଲ୍ୟାଣାର୍ଥେ ଜୀବନ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିଥିଲେ । ସମାଜ ଓ ଶାସନର ଉଚ୍ଚ ମହଲରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିଚରଣ ଥିଲା, ତଥାପି ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ କଥା ଭୁଲୁ ନ ଥିଲେ । ସେ ବହୁ ଉଚ୍ଚ ପଦପଦବୀରେ ଅଧିଷ୍ଠିତ ଥିଲେ ମଧ; ଥିଲେ ପାଟନା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ସିଣ୍ଡିକେଟ୍ ସଭ୍ୟ, ଥିଲେ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ରାଜ୍ୟସଭା ସଦସ୍ୟ । ସମାଜ ଭାବନା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସେ କୌଣସି ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ପଛରେ ନଥିଲେ କେବେ । ଅଧିକନ୍ତୁ ଉଭୟ ଇଂରାଜୀ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାରେ ଲେଖନୀ ଚାଳନା କରିବା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ତାଙ୍କର କୃତିତ୍ୱ ବି ଅବହେଳାର ବସ୍ତୁ ନୁହେଁ । ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ବିଲାତ ଭ୍ରମଣ ବୃତ୍ତାନ୍ତ, ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣାଙ୍ଗ ଜୀବନୀ, ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି ବି ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ । ତାଙ୍କ ରଚନାର ଏହି ସଙ୍କଳନଟି ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିଛନ୍ତି କୃତବିଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଫେସର ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନଂଦ ମହାନ୍ତି । ପୂର୍ବପଶ୍ଚିମ ଭାବ ସଂଘାତ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଗତ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନାରୀଏ କିପରି ନିଜକୁ ଅନନ୍ୟା କରି ଗଢ଼ିଛନ୍ତି ତାହାର ସମ୍ୟକ୍ ପରିଚୟ ମିଳିବ ଏହି ସଙ୍କଳନସ୍ଥ ଲେଖାଗୁଡ଼ିକରୁ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ।

ଦାଶରଥି ଦାସ